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Daniel Defoe.

THE

STANHOPE ESSAY,

1890.

BY

DAVID WATSON RANNIE,

ORIEL COLLEGE.

OXFORD:
B. H. BLACKWELL, 50 & 51, BROAD STREET.

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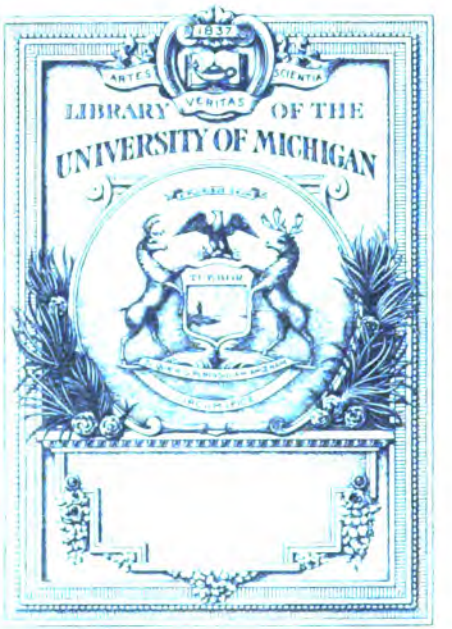
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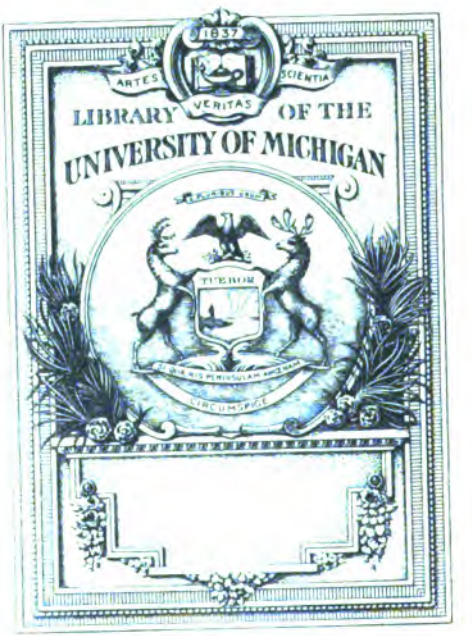
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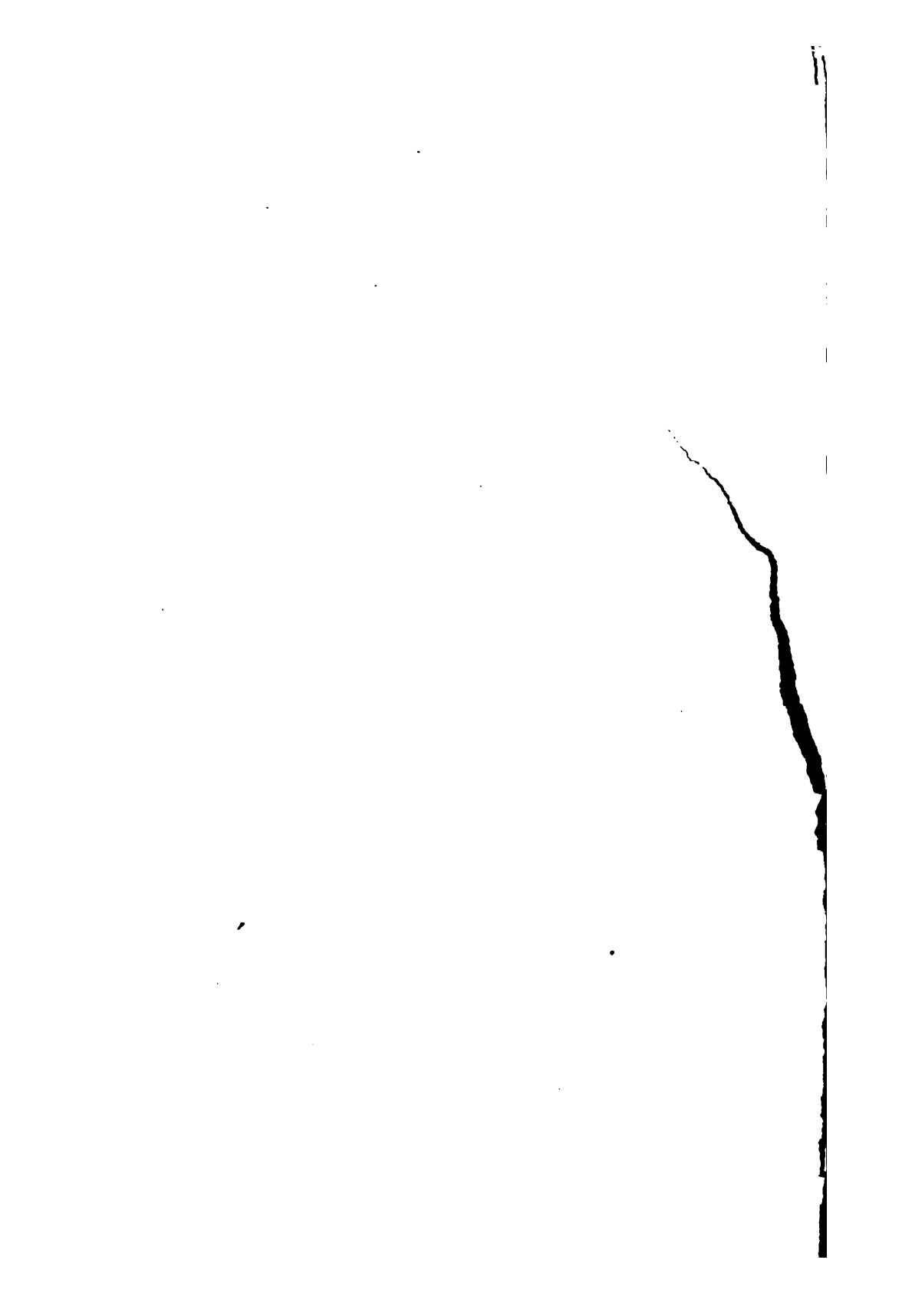

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DANIEL DEFOE.

I.

INTRODUCTORY.

IT is perhaps hardly a sufficient reason for making a man of letters the subject of a historical essay that he has written much and written well on questions of paramount political and historical importance. The historian concerns himself chiefly with men of action; not because he underestimates the importance of thought in the world of politics, but because, in the interest of the division of labour, he leaves its analysis to others, to the philosopher and the literary critic. Yet there have been writers and kinds of literature as historically important as the lives of institutions or the labours of statesmen. Rousseau and the Encyclopedists are as significant to the historian of the French Revolution as to the critic of European literature and philosophy in the eighteenth century; and the student of the Great Rebellion must deal with Hobbes as well as with Hampden. Few individual journalists of our day may come to rank as historical personages; but the historian of the times in which we live will find in journalism, taken as a whole, not only a storehouse of facts, but a source of political influence and an indicator of social temper, without the help of which his work could not be done.

The historical aspect of Defoe.

It is as the supreme journalist of his age that Daniel Defoe first attracts our notice. He was no impassioned preacher of a new social evangel, soon to realize itself in ominous and far-sounding deeds; no expounder of a political philosophy which was the theoretic counterpart of a system of government. But all the help which the journalist can give to the student of society and politics is given in perfection by Defoe. He is most familiar to the world as the author of one immortal work of fiction; but even in his novels we find the qualities which made him the most copious of pamphleteers and the most indefatigable of newspaper-writers; we find the fluency, the readiness, the suggestiveness, the docility, which we associate with one of the most characteristically modern forms of literary effort.

Defoe specially a journalist,

though also a Government agent.

Perhaps we ought to consider that Defoe was one stage nearer historical importance than any mere writer could ever be, on account of his frequent employment as a government agent and negotiator. As we shall see, he managed to gain the ear of the Executive at a time when there was yet no very clear distinction between Court and Government, between Council and Cabinet; and we shall find him acting as the adviser of Ministers and the conductor of delicate negotiations long after his first royal patron had passed away, and with him seemed to have passed away for ever the era of personal government. Yet it is not as a statesman (even if one could ever know what his statesmanship really was) that we can permanently think of Defoe. Our first impression of him turns out to be the abiding one. The further we search into the condition of the England in which his busy mind wrought the more clearly we realize that the time and the man were peculiarly suited to each other, and that of the time we can have no better exponent than the man. His standard and his practice, his ways and his words show us English affairs as in a mirror, not merely because he had much to say about them, not merely because he was an occasional actor in them, but because, from his journalistic facility and versatility, he had an unrivalled sensitiveness to impressions of events and an unrivalled power of reproducing them. As we read his pamphlets we *see* his England and understand it, just as, when we read *Robinson Crusoe* and *Colonel Jack*, we *see* the solitary at work in his island, and the solemn little rascal asleep in the glass-house, or, in his later days, paying his visit of reparation to the robbed dame of Kentish Town. Periods in which greater issues were at stake, periods of greater earnestness and intensity, could not have become incarnate in such a figure as Defoe. He lived in a time which we may well call specially modern, because a new spirit was abroad in it, a spirit which was hardly known before the Revolution. The great forces which had been let loose in the period of the Reformation had by this time spent their early strength; the time had come for their more equal diffusion and gentler influence. The results of the discovery of the New Worlds of the East and the West were indeed only coming into full view; but they were showing themselves now not in the region of wonder and daring, but in that of every day commerce and general well-being. Religious difference had passed the stage of sublimity and agony, and entered upon that of incessant argument, of harassing controversy, of paper-war. Political liberty had been fought for and practically won; it had now to justify its existence and to adapt itself to its environment. The dreaded forms of royal tyranny and papal interference no longer threatened;

The time and the man suited to each other.

The eighteenth century.

it was for the various sections of the emancipated people to settle the balance of power among themselves, and to do so, not now by physical or even moral force, but by intellectual suasion and the indeterminate victories of right reason. Such an age obviously lends itself not to prodigies of heroism and genius, to imaginative poets and religious martyrs, to military despots and inspired deliverers, but to men of superlative shrewdness and superlative tact; men whose standard is not so high as to put them out of sympathy with their fellows; men who have no taste for isolation, but are ready to associate, able to absorb, and willing to communicate.

II.

THE TIME INTO WHICH DEFOE WAS BORN AND GREW UP.

Birth and early life.

DANIEL DEFOE was born in London in 1661,[1] his father, James Foe, being a Nonconformist butcher in St. Giles', Cripplegate, and his grandfather apparently a yeoman or gentleman-farmer of Northamptonshire, in sufficiently substantial circumstances to keep a pack of hounds.[2] Our author thus saw the light in the year after the Restoration; he was twenty-four when James II. came to the throne in 1685, and twenty-seven in the year of the Revolution. He seems to have made his first appearance in the world of letters in 1683, when, according to his own account of the matter, he resorted to his pen in order to carry on a controversy with his Whig associates about the Turkish capture of Vienna; while his entry on the stage of public life dates from 1685, when he tells us that he took part in Monmouth's insurrection. We do not know of his having published again before 1691, when he was just thirty; and the next time we encounter the rebel of 1685 is in 1688, when we find him riding in the force with which William of Orange entered London, and afterwards escorting William and Mary from Whitehall to a banquet in the City. It is thus evident that Defoe's entry on public life was by no means hasty, and that his time of silence and preparation practically coincided with the period between the Restoration and the Revolution. Before we begin to deal with our author's work in the world, something must be said of the world in which the work was done, of the condition of things into which the worker was born, and of the changes which were in progress while he was coming to maturity.

We have outlived the belief in history as mainly concerned with kings and their satellites; and it is unnecessary to insist on the fact that the deeper lessons of the Restoration-period are not to be learned in the unedifying study of Charles II.

[1] Mr. G. A. Aitken, to whom we owe the most recent light on Defoe's domestic history, argues that he must have been born in 1659 or 1660.—See *Athenæum*, Aug. 23rd, 1890.

[2] See *Review*, vii., Preface. It has been recently suggested that James Foe, the grandfather, lived at Elton in Huntingdonshire, and the matter remains in doubt.

and his Court. We know that the shock of reaction which we feel on passing from the bracing atmosphere of the Civil War and the Protectorate to the atmosphere of servility and licence which took its place must not be allowed to deaden us to the sense of the social robustness and constitutional progress which give the period its greatest and most enduring interest. Nor must we look in the wrong quarters for the most pregnant events of the time. The excesses of Royalist enthusiasm, the ingenious cruelties of ecclesiastical despotism, the disgraceful mis-alliance with France, are not the things for which the reign of Charles II. best deserves to be remembered. They are glaring instances of popular fickleness and bad government; but it was not by fickleness or bad government that the Triple Alliance was formed, the Habeas Corpus Act produced, or the Revolution wrought out. The Revolution and its success would be indeed scarcely short of miraculous if the Restoration had permanently undone the work achieved by the Parliamentary opposition to James I., and the military opposition to his son. If zeal for the Stewarts had its disastrous excesses, so also had zeal for the Parliament and the Protectorate; the advance of the future was to be neither on the lines drawn by the Cavalier nor on the lines drawn by the Roundhead. The great lesson of English history, namely that the State is a slowly developing organism with a vitality continuous through the most trying and apparently adverse conditions, is impressed upon us as strongly at the close of the seventeeth century as at any other time; as strongly under Charles II. and his brother as under Cromwell and his soldiery; as strongly by the improved law of Habeas Corpus as by its germ in the Great Charter; as strongly by the slow emergence of ministerial responsibility in the modern sense, as by the boldness and success of Parliamentary claims under Edward III., or the new life that blossomed after, and even under, the despotism of the Tudors.

The Restoration not a mere reaction.

Constitutional progress not checked.

It is not possible here to enter on a complete analysis of the reigns of Charles II. and James II., nor is it necessary for our purpose. But we may perhaps be able to seize upon one or two of the main features, and to indicate the lines of immediate development, progress and change, so as to understand the circle of interests in which Defoe's activity was to work.

Between the state of things under William and Mary, and that under Anne and George I. there is no real break; and the Revolution of 1688 itself seemed to be introduced by a kind of side wind. The power which was used in 1688 and the spirit which prompted the use of it were, we must believe, no sudden spasmodic energies, but the result of centuries of training in habits of reasonable independence and orderly

The Revolution part of a great change.

liberty; and the event of 1688 is really less important than the wider revolution of which it was but an incident, the revolution by which the preponderating share in the Government, executive as well as legislative, was secured to the House of Commons, and the cabinet-system was definitely inaugurated.

The origin of the party system.

If we seek for a comprehensive formula to express the changes hinted at, we can perhaps find no better one than this, that the period was that which witnessed the beginnings of party-government. This is not a merely constitutional phrase, nor does its use imply an arbitrary selection of one particular aspect of political affairs. The origin of the party-system, as we have known it for two centuries, and as we see it at work around us to-day, is much more than one among many kindred and co-equal phenomena. For we can now see that the wranglings of Exclusionists and non-Exclusionists, of Petitioners and Abhorrers, were the rudimentary forms of a regular and perpetual debate, which, after a time of transition and uncertainty, was destined to take its place as the mainspring of political movement. Such mainsprings, such master-forces, there had often been in English history since the nation entered on complex relations with other States and developed complex conditions within. Throughout the period before the Norman Conquest, there was, first in the various English kingdoms, and then in the one English kingdom which took their place, a unity of interests which could not survive the shock of foreign conquest and settlement, the introduction of a complicated jurisprudence, and the inevitable collision of aggressive kings and aggressive churchmen. As time went on, now one interest asserted itself, now another; the leader of progress in one age became its enemy in a following one; and the gradual evolution of the drama was brought about by antagonisms and preponderances which were not permanent, but changed with changing circumstances. Under the Norman and early Angevin Kings, for example (to take one or two of the most salient instances), the master-force in internal politics was the long conflict between the Crown and the feudatories. In the thirteenth century the conflict was the same, but the conditions were entirely altered: baronial influence was now the salvation of the State, as formerly it had been its bane. Later, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the interaction of King and Parliament was the master-force; and later still that position was held by despotic kingship under the Tudors and the Stewarts. When despotic kingship was overcome at the Revolution, it remained to be seen what force was fitted to guide the vessel, and strong enough to do it. It turned out that a permanent antagonism

The master-force in politics for two centuries.

had come into existence within the nation which had power to supply Parliament with the necessary motive, and which, instead of breaking up the State, was to conduct it triumphantly through danger after danger with an ease and security which other nations could envy, but could neither understand nor attain. How the deadly armed strife of the Civil War could sink into a wrangle of factions, and how a wrangle of factions could develop into the stately and potent party-system of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it is no part of our present duty to enquire. It is enough for us to recognize the events, and to realize some of their conditions.

Strength of Parliament.

Foremost among these is the indestructibility and strength of Parliamentary independence. For party-government with its great method, the cabinet-system, formed the copestone of the fabric of Parliamentary sovereignty which previous centuries had been slowly building up; and in them was embodied the solution of the problem as to how the national representatives could secure an effective control of the administration, and how the monarchy could be retained in harmony with the supremacy of the common law. Neither the Stewarts' dislike to Parliaments, nor Cromwell's contempt of them had choked out their life. It was perhaps fortunate for the final victory of Parliament that the restored monarchy of 1660 was the monarchy of Charles II., and that the royal influence which it involved was destitute of morality and patriotism. The King was an extravagant and frivolous libertine rather than a systematic and fanatical absolutist. Personally, he was to be despised rather than dreaded; his ministers were powerful and busy; and it was thus possible to combine sentimental and even religious loyalty to his person and office with sharp and effective opposition to the measures which he sanctioned, and to the men who acted in his name. It was in that way that the history worked itself out. Clarendon's fall differed as much from the fall of a Prime Minister of this century as the Cabal administration differs from a Cabinet of the present day; but they were the parents of the forms which were to come. Almost insensibly, as we study the reign of Charles II., we come to realize the unprecedented fact that kingship as a controlling force is retiring into the background; that Ministers are coming to be what Kings used to be; and that Parliamentary confidence is more essential to Ministerial success than Court favour. Physical force, indeed, is still used where intellectual force was afterwards to serve: Clarendon was impeached and exiled, and Danby was sent to the Tower; the idea of punishment has not yet been distinguished from the idea of supersession. Nevertheless, the form of ministerial responsibility, though somewhat rude and undeveloped, was a genuine innovation, and

Ministerial responsibility.

the expression of a self-reliance on the part of the legislature which showed that none of the constitutional conquests of the past had been lost.

Influence of public opinion.

The initiation of the party-system also implied a large increase in the influence of public opinion and in the facilities for its expression. Nothing in literary history is more striking than the change which came over the character of English books in the seventeenth century. It is a change external and internal; a change in verse and in prose; a change of subjects, of spirit, and of style. It is the change from Shakespeare to Dryden; from Milton to Pope; from Hooker to Locke; from the *Areopagitica* to the *Spectator*. It was a change from the mainly theological or imaginative or impassioned, to the mainly rational, critical and secular, way of treating life; and, in the sphere of politics, it fell in with the change from physical and moral to intellectual force which marks the period at present under consideration. The methods of Bacon and Descartes were beginning to bear fruit in political affairs as they had borne fruit in philosophy, and as they were beginning to bear fruit in science. An era of unprecedented argumentative energy was setting in, which showed itself in apparently humble as well as in more exalted ways. The first coffee-houses in London were opened during the Commonwealth; and it is hardly an exaggeration to say that the institution thus planted was destined to be more powerful than all Cromwell's Ironsides.[1] For while Cromwell's methods passed away with Cromwell himself, the coffee-houses rapidly increased in numbers and became a notable and lasting political force. While the Press was still fettered by the Licensing Act, public opinion was free to pass from brain to brain in the new synagogues of ease and chatter. What better training-ground could there be for the pamphleteers and newspaper-writers who were to come, for the warriors without steel who were to terrify ministers and dictate to Parliaments?[2]

Change in literary style.

The coffee houses.

A free press.

Toleration.

The rationalizing impulse which led to the ready formation and expression of influental public opinion, and to the new form of self-government which was coming into operation, led also to a marked growth of toleration. This, of course, showed itself chiefly in theological and ecclesiastical matters. We have indeed in the course of these pages exhibitions of intolerance to witness, but we shall feel that here also force is giving way to reason. Notwithstanding the Act of Uniformity and the rest of the persecuting statutes of the Restoration, we shall feel that the policy of Elizabeth could never be repeated. In the Church of England itself there was a rationalistic, or, as

[1] In 1675 the coffee-houses were closed for a time as being dangerous to the Government.

[2] In 1695 the Licensing Act expired, and the deluge of pamphlets began.

we should now call it, a Broad Church School; and Nonconformity had undergone development and assumed new forms. Charles II. was an irreligious man, while his father had been a sincere pietist and his grandfather a theological pedant; and thus his Court was not disposed to push orthodoxy to the persecuting extremities of the past. One fact may be taken as sufficiently significant. Though Dissenters were still visited with many forms of legislative disqualification and harassment, the famous Act *De Haeretico Comburendo* was in 1677, no sooner and no later, finally repealed.[1]

Such are some of the main features of the changes which were in progress during the first twenty-five years of Defoe's life. We must now glance briefly at the events which led up to the Revolution of 1688, when, as we have seen, he emerged into the light of public recognition.

The antecedents of the Revolution.

The Restoration was soon followed by a disturbance and uncertainty of the balance of power in Europe. Since the reign of Elizabeth, during which the phrase first came into use, the balance of power had meant practically the self-assertion of the northern Protestant States against the vast dominion and the predominance of Catholic Spain. During the progress of the Thirty Years War, which began as a war in the interest of Protestantism, France, though a Catholic state, intervened on the side of the Protestant powers. From the moment of France's intervention to the Peace of Westphalia, the struggle was essentially one for the advancement of French interests; and it was evident that in the French monarchy, which in 1643 came into the hands, and in 1661 under the sole direction, of Louis XIV., a formidable rival to Spain existed,—a rival, Catholic, despotic, and aggressive as Spain had been, and compact as Spain had never been. Meanwhile the northern Netherlands had steadily and rapidly grown into a Protestant and mercantile power of the first rank, with very great weight in European affairs, and with colonies in the New World which brought them into competition with the other great expanding and colonizing States, namely, Spain and England. But the power of Spain was now decaying as quickly as that of France and the United Provinces was growing. The foreign policy of James I. and Charles I. had been uncertain and vacillating. That of Cromwell was chiefly determined by considerations of trade. Commercial rivalry led him into wars both with the United Provinces and Spain; and in order to thwart the latter he entered into formal alliance with France.

Foreign politics.

Advance of France and United Provinces.

Decline of Spain.

At the Restoration there were thus three great Continental powers in the field, and it was an all-important question with which of them England would choose to ally herself. As

Foreign relations of Charles II.

[1] 29 Car. II., cap. 9.

has so often happened in history, the problem was complicated by inter-marriages. Charles II.'s sister had married the hereditary Stadholder of the United Provinces; and Charles himself married a princess of Portugal,—which State had recently won back her independence of Spain by French help. An anti-Spanish, and on the whole French, policy was that of Charles and his Chancellor Clarendon; but, at that time, such a policy was not necessarily anti-Dutch. For the young Prince of Orange, Charles' nephew, was still a minor; and the ruling party in Holland, notwithstanding the certainty of French aggression, clung to the French alliance. In a few years, however, much was changed. A trading dispute led to a war between the English and the Dutch, lasting from 1665 to 1667, in the course of which the Dutch war ships made their memorable appearance in the Thames and the Medway, and the Dutch forces blockaded London. Louis of France, still nominally the ally of the United Provinces, was inclining to the side of England, because he could not hope to retain Dutch friendship when he should attempt to annex the Spanish Netherlands. When peace was made, France and the United Provinces were in opposition to each other, and Charles was the pensionary as well as the ally of Louis.

Alliance of Charles and Louis.

Events now developed rapidly. Clarendon fell; and the *prestige* of the old alliance with France vanished. Alike by the mass of the English people and by the wisest English statesmen it was felt that if a balance of power was to be maintained in Europe at all, and if Protestantism was to hold its own, France must be resisted, and that England and Holland must combine for the purpose. That belief was embodied in the famous Triple Alliance of England, Holland, and Sweden, which was soon followed by the secret counter-Treaty of Dover between the Kings of France and England.

The Triple Alliance. The Treaty of Dover.

The religious aspect of the situation was now coming into great prominence. The anti-French crusade which had begun was more entirely on behalf of Protestantism than the anti-Spanish wars of Elizabeth and Cromwell, which were partly for the reformed faith and partly for supremacy in the New World. Although Charles II. had not openly professed Catholicism he was known to be favourable to it. The second war with Holland, the excitement of the Popish Plot, the certainty that the Duke of York, the presumptive heir to the throne, was a Romanist, and the growing shamelessness of the transactions between the Courts of England and France, kindled popular enthusiasm and strengthened Parliamentary resolution. While Charles lived, national unanimity was prevented by the bifurcation of parties, the questionableness of Monmouth's claim to favour, the Whig excesses after the defeat of the Exclusion Bill, and the

The religious question.

enormous strength of the Anglican doctrine of non-resistance. But when he died the situation was soon simplified, and the nation saw the need for closing its ranks. Charles was not without attractive qualities; he had, unquestionably, either from indifference, weakness, or wisdom, abstained on the whole from acts of glaring illegality; and he had deferred his open profession of Roman Catholicism until he lay on his death-bed. In James II.'s reign the characteristic Stewart despotism was renewed; and it was renewed with one feature which had not formerly appeared in it, and which was to prove intolerable to all Englishmen alike. Neither James's narrow-minded bigotry and obstinacy, nor his many acts of oppression and defiance of the common law might have been enough to alienate the affections of the Tory and Anglican sections of the State. But all his oppression had one definite and avowed object, namely, the establishment of the Roman Catholic religion in England, with the approval, and, if necessary, with the help, of France. This was the point towards which the events of more than twenty years had been converging; and this was the point on which for once national unanimity was to be secured. All England was bent on maintaining Protestantism at home if not on the Continent; and it seemed that she could do it only by means of close relations with Holland and her Stadholder. To him, therefore, she now turned. He had married his cousin the Princess Mary; and this connexion did something towards appeasing the scruples of those most zealous for hereditary right. At the very moment when, in the acquittal of the Seven Bishops, the principle of self-government showed its utmost elasticity, the State showed how real and operative was the unity to which it had attained. Party-divisions and sectional mistrusts were forgotten; the famous invitation to the Prince of Orange was despatched; and the Revolution was virtually accomplished.

Strength of anti-Catholic feeling in England.

The Prince of Orange.

III.

DEFOE IN THE REIGNS OF WILLIAM AND MARY AND WILLIAM ALONE. 1688—1702.

Defoe and the Revolution.

DEFOE, we have seen, early inclined to politics, and was so strong a Whig as to take part in the more than questionable Shaftesbury-Monmouth insurrection of 1685, which had such dire consequences. He managed to escape the vengeance of the King and of Jeffreys, and got back to London to enter on what was apparently the business of a wholesale hose-factor[1] in Freeman's Court, or Yard, Cornhill. When the Revolution happened, he showed himself enthusiastically on its side.[2] He had now been three years in business, and in January, 1688, had been admitted Liveryman of the City of London. But he was by no means disposed to narrow his interests to the width of a London alley. Where stirring things were being transacted, there was Defoe sure to be, either as a spectator or a participator. In the excitement of the Dutch arrival in England he fully shared; and as William, in his eastward progress, drew near the metropolis, Defoe, armed and on horseback, joined the second line of his forces at Henley-upon-Thames. He was present at the debates of the Convention which led up to the coronation of William and Mary and the Bill of Rights; and his subsequent utterances on the subject show how firmly and sympathetically he grasped the principles of the new constitutional settlement. The Convention, he considered, effectually secured the Crown in the hands of Protestants: it asserted the rights of the people of England, assembled either in Parliament or Convention, to limit the succession

He supports it.

[1] Defoe was very sensitive as to the precise description of his trade.—See *Review* ii., p. 149.

[2] Though no undoubted contemporaneous writing by Defoe on the policy of James II. is extant, we know his opinion of it, and especially of its insidious toleration, from what he wrote much later. "Was ever anything more absurd than the conduct of King James and his party in wheedling the Dissenters?—giving them liberty of conscience by his own arbitrary dispensing authority, and his expecting they should be content with their religious liberty at the price of the Constitution!"—*Review* v., 75. He was outspoken on the Exclusion Bill. "Those . . . who by their endeavours for the Bill of Exclusion showed that their religion was more sacred to them than the supposed Divine Right of succession vested in a Popish prince."—*The Englishman's Choice and True Interest*, p. 18.

to the throne; and he spoke out with entire candour against "the absurd doctrines of passive obedience and non-resistance," which he thought had by the Convention been "exploded or rejected as inconsistent with the constitution of Britain."[1] The Bill of Rights "had stabbed all sorts of civil tyranny to the heart."[2] As an adherent of his fathers' Nonconformist creed, it was natural that he should rejoice in the Toleration Act, though he may be thought to have showed enthusiasm when he urged his Dissenting brethren to commemorate annually so small an instalment of liberty of thought and action.[3]

Such a citizen might or might not succeed as a hosier; but it was certain that he would keep himself well in the forefront of public affairs. At this stage of his life he did not succeed in business, though it would seem that his failure resulted from ventures beyond the limits of his regular trade. What these ventures were is by no means clear. He traded with Spain and Portugal, and had been in the former country;[4] while in various passages of his writings he shows a sense of the danger to mercantile success both of over-speculation and of want of diligence, which may well have been born of his own experience. What is quite certain is that he became a bankrupt in 1692, and that, in pardonable fear of the fate which in those days overtook insolvents, he absconded, probably to Bristol, where there is a tradition of his having lived at this time in mysterious retirement, shut up indoors during the week, and going abroad on Sundays in a guise so fine that he was called the "Sunday Gentleman." It is difficult to conceive a figure so nimble and capable sticking long in the debtor's slough. We are not surprised, therefore, when we learn that he not only soon made a composition with his creditors, but gradually paid off accumulated debts to a very large amount. What does seem surprising, however, even in a career which is a succession of surprises, is the next turn of the wheel by which the zealous citizen-volunteer and bankrupt hosier was brought back to a prominence and success from which he never again fell away. Whatever may have been the cause of his temporary failure as a business man, it was as a business man that he was now to succeed, though in no ordinary field. He tells us that "misfortunes in business having unhinged" him "from matters of trade," he was offered a very promising commercial opening at Cadiz, but that Providence had other work for him to do. The instru-

Bankruptcy.

Goes to Bristol.

[1] *Review* vi., 470. [2] Ib. ii., 147.
[3] Ib. ii., 500.—See Wilson's Life of Defoe, i., p. 181.
[4] In the *Review* for Jan. 27, 1711, he speaks of a certain Spanish proverb, "which I learnt when I lived in that country."

1694. Called upon to suggest ways and means to Government.

ment of Providence was in this case the Government; and the work which Defoe had to do was not building up a fortune for himself in Cornhill or at Cadiz, but devising ways and means to defray the cost of the great war which followed the Revolution—the war with France, which broke out in 1689, and was ended at the Peace of Ryswick in 1697.[1] We shall see presently how difficult the ways and means question was at this juncture, and how much activity and fertility of brain were needed to cope with it. It was no small distinction for a London citizen, middle class by birth and Nonconformist in creed, to be thus selected as having the most active and fertile brain procurable; and such a choice seems an anticipation of times which were coming but had not yet come. The totality of Defoe's work lies before us, and we can feel how true was the divination which discovered thus early the quality of the man. But as to the means by which Defoe had impressed those in authority, whether it was by writings that are now lost[2] or by the ingenuity of his projects unfolded on 'Change or in the coffee-houses, or whether it was simply by unparalleled audacity and self-assertion, we are left to conjecture. Certain it is that at this date (1694) Defoe had won the ear, not only of the Government, but of Royalty itself. In the year of her death the gentle Queen Mary was superintending the laying out of the gardens around Kensington Palace, to which William III.'s inability to bear London smoke had transferred the Court; and by her side stood Defoe, devising ways and means here also in this Eden-like retreat, in those days utterly removed from the turmoil of the metropolis.[3] Nor was distinction the sole harvest wich Defoe reaped from Government patronage. In recognition of his financial ability he was made accountant to the Commissioners for collecting the Glass Duty—one of the new devices for bringing money into the Treasury. His star was now coming well out of eclipse. We hear no more of the hosier's business in Cornhill, but we hear of a manufactory of bricks and pantiles being started at Tilbury, and of Defoe's being first its secretary and then its owner,—an enterprise from which substantial results were bye-and-bye to come.

Helps Queen Mary at Kensington.

Accountant to the Glass Duty Commissioners.

Pantile works at Tilbury.

The reign of William was one of struggle and difficulty. The unanimity which had brought him to England and raised him and his consort to the throne passed away with the immediate danger he had averted. When he faced the

Factions of William III's reign.

[1] See the *Appeal to Honour and Justice*.—Hazlitt's Defoe, vol. i.

[2] Mr. Lee considers it was by the pamphlet, *The Englishman's Choice and True Interest*, which will presently be noticed, and which was published in 1694.

[3] *Tour through Great Britain*.—See Lee's Life of Defoe, i., 29.

duties of an English king, he found that England was no longer governed by kings, but by parties who hardly understood their own principles, and had as yet devised no method of regular constitutional action. He was hindered and perplexed by discontented classes and discordant factions. The bulk of the clergy held to the doctrine of passive obedience; and, having been saved from the results of a practical application of it, they raised the banner again, and waved it in opposition to their saviour. The army did not like its new master. The king was an alien, taciturn in disposition, cold and unengaging in manner, feeble in health, averse from display. Grateful to him as the nation was, and firm as was his hold of the formal allegiance of the majority of his subjects, he never lost the character of a foreign political care-taker, gradually becoming unpopular. In Scotland and in Ireland he had to make good his position by force of arms; he had to join the great coalition which in 1689 made war on France. James was intriguing in Ireland, intriguing with Louis of France, the enemy of England and of Europe; and his followers were an English faction, combining treachery with party warfare. Never had a king a harder or more ungracious task.

Growing unpopularity of the King.

If William's task was made harder by the inter-connexion of his enemies which followed James' flight to France, the duty of his supporters was made clearer by the stealthy hostility practised by the Jacobites. The discovery of "Preston's Plot," as it was called—the plot for a joint Jacobite and French invasion, at which even Archbishop Sancroft seems to have connived—led Defoe to issue a satire in verse, called *A New Discovery of an Old Intrigue*. The time was at hand when he would find a more congenial medium than verse, and do more substantial service to the cause of the new settlement. The most serious feature of the situation was the Jacobite complexion of Tory opinion in England, and the air of patriotism thus worn by designs which were essentially revolutionary. The costliness of the war with France was what the Opposition patriots especially objected to. The Government admitted the expense, but they thought it better to meet it by financial ingenuity than to purchase economy at the price of the enslavement of Europe. Defoe made himself the mouthpiece of their opinion in a pamphlet called *The Englishman's Choice and True Interest in the Vigorous Prosecution of the War against France, and serving King William and Queen Mary, and acknowledging their right*. He boldly identified the Opposition of the time with the supporters of James II.'s illegal prerogative, and asked scornfully—"Who . . . could endure the Gracchi talking against sedition? And what true Englishman can with

Jacobite plots.

1690.

Defoe's early writings.

The expense of the war.

1694.

Defoe's support of the King.

patience hear them declaim against taxes for carrying on the war against France, who were eager to give what the Court could ask in a war against Protestants?"[1] He considered that the power of France was being overrated. She had seen, he thought, her best days, and could not survive a vigorous shock at close quarters.[2] Yet, as no one can have known better than Defoe, the financial problems of the time were by no means easy of solution. The second half of the seventeenth century was a critical period in the history of the Exchequer. One great form of medieval taxation had been formally abolished after the Restoration, when permanent or "hereditary" excise duties were substituted for the irksome feudal incidents of aids, reliefs, wardship, and the rest.[3] The change marks the transition from direct to indirect taxation which sharply divides the history of English finance. The expansion of England, which grew out of the discovery of the New World, was now bearing some of its economic fruit; and men were realizing how much the Treasury might be made to profit by every advance in internal and external trade. What Charles II.'s Convention Parliament did for the former, James I. had done for the latter; and the result was that, at the end of Charles' reign, the customs and the excise were almost equal in amount, and were ahead in importance of all other sources of revenue.[4]

Indirect taxation.

But the taxation of trade, potent and successful as it thus quickly proved itself, was not enough to meet such an exigency as William III.'s great war. The old simple form of finance, the theory of which was that the year's charge should be defrayed from the year's impost, was inadequate to the new scale of expenditure forced upon England. Only one course was open: the nation must give up the attempt to follow the ready-money system, and launch itself upon the sea of credit. The State must borrow, and borrow from its own citizens. A beginning in this direction, though a most disreputable one, had been made under Charles II., when the Government fell into the mistake of availing themselves of the hoards accumulated by the London goldsmiths, who were then the sole bankers in the country. The "Closing of the Exchequer" by the Cabal Administration, that is to say, the refusal to repay principal as well as interest, which produced so much disturbance in economic conditions at the time, was as much due to financial inexperience as to express ministerial

Public credit.

1672.

[1] Lee's Defoe, i., 30—31.

[2] Ib. "Like a great machine screwed up to the height, it will never leave turning till it comes to the bottom."

[3] A temporary excise on beer and ale, suggested by Dutch practice, was instituted in 1643.

[4] See Macaulay's History (ed. 1858), i., 298.

malice. Men had not yet distinguished between individual and national indebtedness; they had not grasped the idea that a debt might be *funded*, that the repayment of principal might be practically postponed for ever, without immorality on the part of the borrowers or ruin to the lender; they did not foresee the future either of banking or of the National Debt. The idea gradually dawned; and when William III.'s financial problems came up for solution, they were met by a large application of public credit, and by the introduction of temporary funding in the form of tontines, by which the debt lasted until the death of the longest survivor.

The National Debt.

1693.

Defoe was not the only original thinker on such matters to whom the nation could turn in its perplexity. In Montague and Godolphin it possessed two most eminent financiers, the first a bold and far-seeing inventor, the second a capable and cautious administrator. Along with them must be placed the mysterious Scottish adventurer, William Paterson, whose genius seemed to have projected, and whose name will for ever be associated with, one of the greatest institutions of the world. If Montague may be said to have started the National Debt, Paterson may be said to have invented the Bank of England. The two institutions indeed were correlative; since an extensive system of borrowing by the Government implied a national *apparatus* for the manipulation of the immense sums involved. When Montague adopted Paterson's plan, the banking company was but one corporate lender among many lenders; the time was to come when it would be the one medium of one vast national transaction.

The Bank of England.

1694.

Besides public loans and the banking-system, many supplementary financial expedients were provided. The Glass Duty has been noticed. In 1692 the Land Tax was fixed at 4s. per £: and in the following year stamp-duties were introduced for the first time as a security for loans. Bye-and-bye there were taxes on marriages, births, burials, bachelors, and widowers, as well as on stone, earthenware, etc. Government lotteries were set on foot; and Exchequer Bills were issued to act as a temporary currency while the debased coinage was in process of being reformed by the help of Montague, of Newton, and of Locke.

1694.

Financial expedients.

What specific aid did Defoe give towards the removal of the Ways and Means difficulty? His writings on this subject, as on all others with which he dealt, make it alive and luminous for us, and show how well he understood its conditions. He fully realized that his age was one of financial change; and that the essence of the change was the sudden and extensive increase of public credit. He realized also the more general social effects of the change and their danger; how the new way of treating money was creating an indepen-

Defoe's ideas.

dent trade in it, and the stock jobber and the usurer were becoming figures too busy and too prominent in English society.[1] The time was one of adventure, or, as he called it, *projecting*; and no one was more fit to speak on the subject, for he was himself, by natural endowment, a projector. The permanent outcome of his speculations at this time is the well-known *Essay on Projects*, which was published in 1698.[2] This work embodies one or two practical suggestions for raising revenue, which may be those, or specimens of those, which he made to the Government. He complains, for example, of the unjust incidence of taxation, by which, while trade and land had been heavily burdened, retail dealing had escaped. He points out how the labourer, through the excise on his beer, contributed more to the taxes than the well-to-do provincial shop-keeping alderman who brewed his own ale; and suggests that this anomalous state of things might be rectified simply by a proper administration of the Land Tax Act, by which a thorough Government inspection of every man's means should be made, all evasion prevented, "and plain English and plain dealing be practised indifferently throughout the kingdom."[3]

Essay on Projects, 1698.

Another project was an ingenious scheme to facilitate the manning of the Navy, which was made difficult by the exorbitantly high wages given, or rather extorted, in the merchant service, and the consequent tempting of seamen away from the fleet. Defoe proposed that liberty of contract between seamen and their hirers, mercantile and naval, should be done away with, and a department of government set up in which all seamen should enlist, and by which their wages should be paid according to a fixed rate. The department was to be entrusted with a large sum of money, consisting not only of payments by the merchants to be expended in wages, but of over-payments which were to serve as a tax. A surplus for the Exchequer was also to be secured by a freightage of 40s. per ton upon imports; by a four per cent. *ad valorem* tax on all goods; and by an impost on the shipping of coals at Newcastle.[4] By this means he considered that the necessary supplies could be raised without oppressing any class.

None of Defoe's writings is more characteristic than this *Essay*, with its vivacity, its argumentative force, its lucidity,

[1] See *Essay on Projects*, p. 34. Also *Essay upon Loans*, p. 4. The citizens began to decline trade and turn usurers . . "The whole city . . a corporation of usurers."

[2] Before publication, Defoe had kept it by him for five years.—See Essay: author's preface.

[3] *Essay on Projects*, 14, 15.

[4] *Ib.*, pp. 179—189.

its width of range, its patient detail. It did not confine itself to strictly financial proposals; indeed, Defoe modestly said in his preface that he "laid by" the subject of Ways and Means on the score of its pre-occupation by wiser heads. Therefore, after an elaborate dissertation on the new institution of banking, we have various schemes of social improvement; *e.g.*, for the better management of highways, for friendly societies, for insurance, for a literary academy, for the higher education of women,—all modern and shrewd; all brilliantly stated and carefully worked out. The proposal for a literary academy, so interesting in its anticipation of recent suggestions, contains an attack on the custom of profane swearing, which had reached a great height in Defoe's day. The tone of the polemic is not Puritan; the custom is denounced as inconsistent with literary grace and social refinement rather than as an offence against morals or religion;[1] yet it is treated with a seriousness of disapprobation which prepares us to find our author shortly afterwards coming forward as an uncompromising preacher of righteousness.[2] The tone of public morals which had been fixed at the Restoration was displeasing to the King and Queen, especially to the Queen; and, during her husband's absences on the Continent, she used much direct influence to bring about an improvement in this respect. Parliament caught some of the reforming spirit; and many statutes in restraint of profane swearing were passed. Defoe rushed into the fray with his rousing pamphlet called the *Poor Man's Plea*. In this tract he took the characteristic line of a Nonconformist controversialist,—a line independent, uncompromising, and democratic. The nation, he urged, must be willing to reform itself. The sad decadence from the high standard of the Reformation began with the advent of the Stewarts and grew wilder at the Restoration.

Public morals.

1698. *Poor Man's Plea.*

The present well-meant efforts, he maintains, are comparatively fruitless,—why? Because the new laws are enforced against the poor and not the rich. The nobility, gentry, and clergy must reform themselves. Virtue, like vice, spreads from above downwards.[3] Drunkenness had been literally

[1] "I am not about to argue anything of this being sinful and unlawful, as forbid by Divine rules; let the parson alone to tell you that, who has, no question, said as much to as little purpose in this case as in any other." —*Essay*, p. 142.

[2] The reader of the *Review* remembers that one of the avowed objects of the "Mercure Scandale" was the reproof of blasphemies and indecent levities.—See, *e.g.*, *Review* i., pp. 47—8.

[3] "The laws are cobweb laws, in which the small flies are catched, and the great ones break through."—*Poor Man's Plea*, p. 9. "We do not find the rich drunkard carried before my Lord Mayor, nor a swearing lewd merchant fined, or set in the stocks."

taught by the gentry to their inferiors; they glory in it, and connect it with every public rejoicing. The rich ought to be more strictly punished than the poor because of the power of their example. The justices do not encourage information against those in high places: if they did they would get it. Many of the clergy are as bad as the gentry. In short, the mass of the people must say to the reforming rulers: *Physicians, heal yourselves.*

Defoe was high in the Government favour, and he has often been censured as a self-seeking trimmer. But there is assuredly no trace of the sycophant in the *Poor Man's Plea.*

Standing Army question.

A breathing time in the great European strife, though but a brief one, came with the Peace of Ryswick. But there was no breathing time for the party strife in England, nor did the close of the war bring any abatement of William III.'s unpopularity. A warm controversy immediately began as to whether a standing army should be retained in time of peace. Such retention was of course contrary to English practice in the past. The only strictly legal English force was the militia; and Charles II. was grudgingly allowed to keep a small body of Guards for the protection of his person in the capital, and to add to it by the transportation to England of the garrison of Tangiers. The militarism of the Protectorate had accustomed Englishmen to the presence of regulars, but had not reconciled them to it. To Tories it seemed the new-fangled instrument of anti-Church and State fanaticism; to many Whigs it recalled the camp at Hounslow, from which James II. threatened London and the liberties of England. With a large and composite party, therefore, the hatred of regular troops was a passion; and they could not be brought to see that the example of other nations and the sweeping advance of France had entirely altered the condition of things. The Press was free after the Peace of Ryswick; and public opinion found vent in a war of pamphlets for and against standing armies. A certain John Trenchard, son of a late Minister, expressed the sentiments of those Whigs to whom the militia was the *ne plus ultra;* and a host of writers followed his example. After a time, and as a matter of course, Defoe was ready with his contribution. Trenchard had issued a pamphlet under cover of the initials A, B, C, D, on which Defoe wrote *Reflexions.*

Pamphlets.

The tract is a brilliant piece of controversial writing; the author fences with skill and delight, and wins an easy victory. Trenchard's great point was that the militia was sufficient, and that England could not maintain her liberties against a standing army. If the militia is so strong, argued Defoe, and if it can defend England against possible foreign invasion,

how should a small body of regular troops overpower it and her? Trenchard's reply was—and it was the regular reply of the Jacobite, Tory, and discontented Whig sections—"What the militia cannot do ought to be done by the fleet."

To this Defoe rejoined that a fleet might destroy liberties as well as an army;[1] and so might the militia. He saw what the Government saw, and what we all see now, that war had become a science, and that some Englishmen must specialize as soldiers if England was to hold her own in the fresh struggles which the ambition of France was making certain to come in the near future.

Neither Defoe's arguments nor the quiet teaching of facts availed to overcome the mass of English prejudice; and the King and his Whig Ministers, among whom Somers took the lead, appealed to Parliament in vain. The force of 80,000 troops in existence at the end of the war was cut down to 7,000, and William was even made to part with his favourite Dutch guards. Insular dislike to the foreign war combined with irrational attachment to tradition. William was deeply wounded, proposing at one time to leave England to her fate and return to Holland. The country could ill have spared such a leader in the unsettled state of the party system, and while the aspect of things on the Continent was so threatening. The balance of power was as far from being settled as ever; for Charles II., of Spain, the feeble head of the scattered Spanish kingdom, had no heir, and it was necessary to arrange for the disposal of his territories, if they were not to be swallowed up by France. The two secret Partition Treaties of 1698 and 1700 were attempts at such an arrangement; but they were not ultimately successful, and to the English Parliament they seemed high-handed strokes of an alien's diplomacy, inconsistent with the supremacy of the national assembly. Meanwhile Charles II. made his famous Will, leaving all his dominions to the Duke of Anjou, his grandson; and Louis XIV. accepted it. The efforts of diplomacy were frustrated, and Europe was confronted with the spectre of French predominance in a form of unprecedented magnitude.

1678.

Opposition to William.

The year 1701 was critical. William was face to face with a new Parliament and a new Ministry in England; but neither in England nor in Europe was there the will to resist France which he desired to see in exercise. In England, indeed, there was a strong desire to acquiesce in

1701.

Indifference of English parties.

[1] "Is it not all one to be slaves to an army of musketeers as a rabble of tars?"—*Reflexions on a late Pamphlet.* "I remember 'twas a great cry among the Jacobite party about four years ago; what a vast charge are we at about a war for the Confederates. *Damn the Confederates;* let us keep a good fleet, and we are able to defend ourselves against all the world."—*Ib.*

the situation created by the Spanish Will, to ignore the aggressions of Louis on the Dutch garrisons in the Spanish Netherlands, and to retire into a complete isolation. The energy of Parliament was expended on the impeachment of the leading Whigs who were associated with recent policy, and especially with the hated Partition Treaties. Public opinion again burst forth in a controversy of pamphlets, and again Defoe's voice rang out clear.

Defoe's personal loyalty to Dutch William never wavered. For the English aversion to him as a foreigner he had an unmeasured contempt, which at this moment he threw into the spirited satire called *The True Born Englishman*. Defoe was too able and too thoroughly a child of his time not to write good satiric verse; and *The True Born Englishman* is satiric verse of which neither Pope nor Swift need have been ashamed. He flings himself into satire because not otherwise can he expose his nation's exasperating failings, its insular pride, its factiousness, its greed, its discontent.

The True-Born Englishman.

> "Who shall this bubbl'd nation disabuse
> While they their own felicities refuse?
> Who at the wars have made such mighty pother,
> And now are falling out with one another.
>
> . . . . .
>
> Search, Satire, search, a deep incision make;
> The poison's strong, the antidote's too weak.
> 'Tis pointed truth must manage this dispute,
> And downright English Englishmen confute."

And downright English he gives them indeed. What is their origin, he asks; what is the English nationality, that they should be so proud of it, and scorn all others? Romans, Saxons, Danes, Scots, Picts, Irish, came and wrangled with the Briton for the precious soil and

> "From this amphibious ill-born mob began
> That vain ill-natured thing, an Englishman."

What is Norman blood but that of plundering pirates and buccaneers? Yet the English boast of nothing so much.

> "These are the heroes that despise the Dutch,
> And rail at new-come foreigners so much;
> Forgetting that themselves are all derived
> From the most scoundrel race that ever lived."

The national character, the satirist goes on, is what might be expected from such origin.

> "The Pict has made them sour, the Dane morose,
> False from the Scot, and from the Norman worse."

The Englishman is bold indeed, but only when he is well filled with beef and ale. In religion he is sectarian; in social life he is ungrateful and uncivil. Above all, he is headstrong and indisposed to subjection; he is never satisfied with his governors; that is why he prayed to the Dutch to come and

deliver him from his Popish oppressor, and why he now turns against his deliverer. As for the deliverer himself, his figure is introduced with a flourish of trumpets. Britannia sings his praises and laments the ingratitude of her sons.

> "William the name that's spoke by every tongue,
> William's the darling subject of my song."

It is complained that he relies too much on strangers; but he would be mad to trust Englishmen.

> "For laying other arguments aside,
> This thought may mortify our English pride,
> That foreigners have faithfully obeyed him,
> And none but Englishmen have e'er betrayed him."

All this is, doubtless, the language of a partisan, and of a partisan fond of hearing his own voice. English distrust of foreigners was ridiculous enough; but the satirist might have remembered in charity that English liberty owed no small debt in the past to that very sentiment, and that nations do not unlearn their traditions in a day.

Defoe becomes personally known to William.

On Defoe's personal fortunes the *True Born Englishman* had two important results, inasmuch as it made him a popular author and secured him an introduction to the King.[1] His indictment against his countrymen's good nature must have been too heavily charged when they were so willing to buy and pleased to read it.

1701.

The tide, in fact, was turning. William III. was nearing the end of his long-suffering days; but before leaving the world he was to feel the strength of national support. A remarkable movement took place in the county of Kent. In May, 1701, five gentlemen of the county, one of whom was the chairman of Quarter Sessions, presented a petition to the House of Commons, drawn up in the name of the freeholders of Kent, and signed by the deputy-lieutenants, the justices, the grand jury, and others, expressing a sense of the danger of England and of Europe; complete confidence in, and gratitude to the King; a protest against faction; and an earnest entreaty that Parliament would provide for religion and safety, and support the King in his efforts to assist his allies. When we consider what the conduct of the Tory party was in impeaching the late ministers instead of supporting them, and spreading the spirit of faction and distrust, we can hardly think either the substance or the wording of the Kentish Petition alarmingly violent. Yet the House of Commons at once adopted towards it an attitude of uncompromising hostility. It was with great difficulty that it could be brought to a hearing; when heard it was voted scandalous, insolent, and seditious; and the five gentlemen who had taken charge

The Kentish Petition.

[1] *Appeal to Honour and Justice.*—Hazlitt's Defoe, i., p. 4.

of it were imprisoned without trial or hearing, or even, as it seems, without formal order of the House.[1]

The Legion Memorial.

It is to Defoe that we are indebted for the most circumstantial account of the Kentish Petition; and to him is generally attributed the so-called *Legion Memorial*[2] which was presented to the House while the five were still in custody, and which showed to what dimensions the new movement had grown. The memorial is astonishingly assured and democratic in tone. The Commons are informed that the freeholders who elected them are their masters, and may deprive them of their position whenever they like. They are told that the arrest and detention of the Kentish Five was illegal, and their voting the petition insolent a contradiction in itself, because the freeholders are their superiors. They are then indicted on many other counts,—on their resistance both to the Partition Treaties and to the preparations against France; on their conduct of the impeachments of the Whig lords, on their viciousness of life and neglect of the reformation of manners, etc. The document then proceeds to lay down the law on all these matters with the momentous firmness of the Petition of Right, and adds insult to injury by proposing that the House should pass a vote of thanks to the men whom it had put in prison.

"Englishmen are no more to be slaves to Parliament than to Kings." These are the last words of the *Legion Memorial*, and they express its deepest significance. It is comparatively unimportant that it stopped the high handed doings of the Commons, and that the five were allowed to return to their Kentish manor-houses in peace. It marked the highest point of democratic opinion at the time, of the opinion round which the Whig party was to rally, and with which it was to support the King. The Tory view of representation was that the elective act constituted a renunciation of the right of self-government while the Parliament lasted,—a view which reminds us of Hobbes' doctrine of the origin of sovereignty. Against this the Whigs of 1701 held the subordination of elected to electors at all times[3] and the consequent right of free petitioning, free criticism, and even dictation, on the part of the constituencies. When one reflects that the duration of Parliaments was then governed by the Triennial Act, one is disposed to think that the Whig attitude was rather arrogant, and could be justified only by great provocation. The treatment of the Kentish Petition and its bearers certainly was great provocation, and Defoe was moved by it to draw out

Parliament and the Electorate.

Defoe on the subject.

[1] See *History of the Kentish Petition*.—Hazlitt's Defoe, iii.

[2] So-called from the numbers of its authors, said to be 200,000. "Our name is Legion, and we are many."

[3] See Ranke, *History of England*, v. 291.

his application of Locke's political teaching in systematic form. He issued a pamphlet called the *Original Power of the Collective Body of the People of England Examined and Asserted*, with an ingenious double dedication to the King and the two Houses of Parliament. William was congratulated on being the people's king, and on possessing the true *jus divinum* in the *vox populi*, which was the *vox Dei*. Parliament, on the other hand, was reminded that all political power in England originally lay in the body of freeholders, who resorted to representation merely because they were too numerous to come together personally in one assembly. The Commons were thus "an abridgment of the many volumes of the English nation." They were a means, and a dignified and justly powerful means by which the nation could exercise its self-government; but the ultimate power, like the original right, remained with the nation which used the means. The consequence was that, just as a king who misgoverned might be resisted, so might a Parliament. All true political power was founded in *reason*, not in force; we had retained monarchy not because we had no right to set up a republic, but because we had good reason to believe that there was more true liberty to be had with a constitutional king than without one.

Ultimate power with freeholders.

Power founded in reason.

Before the sheets of Defoe's tract were printed, his teaching found practical expression in a dissolution. The death of James II. in the autumn, and the recognition of the Pretender by Louis of France, brought an enormous accession of popularity to William. The kind of anti-French enthusiasm he had so long looked for in vain was roused at last. The addresses which reached the King not only expressed affection for him, but reflected on the factious opposition of the Parliament just prorogued, and boldly hinted at a dissolution. The dissolution took place, and a new Parliament was chosen, in full sympathy with the King and the Protestant Alliance.

Louis' recognition of the Pretender.

New Parliament.

War was now a certainty, and was in immediate prospect. Long before Louis' recognition of the Pretender, even before his acceptance of Charles of Spain's Will, Defoe brought the true character of the situation forcibly before his fellow-countrymen. In *The Two Great Questions Considered*, he asserted his belief that the French King was too shrewd to pay any attention to the preposterous Spanish Will, since if he accepted the legacy for his grandson, he would inevitably renew the war with the Confederacy, at great disadvantage from the loss of many towns and the increased strength of the Empire; while he would gain nothing for France, because the Duke of Anjou's monarchy would soon become Spanish and foreign. As to England's duty, the case was clear. Her counsels, unfortunately, were divided, and her troops had made but a poor figure in the late campaigns; but, come

1700.

Approach of war.

The Two Great Questions.

what might, she must insist on the preservation of the Balance of Power, and must save her trade by preventing Spain from falling either to the Emperor or to France. If, then, France prefers the partition to the legacy, England must join Holland in forcing the Emperor and the Italian Princes to do their part; if she accepts the legacy, the Confederacy must re-form, and force it from her grasp. England's first and last thought must be her trade: in that, not in her fleet, lay her vital secret.[1] *The French must not get Spain.*

If such were Defoe's views in 1700, we may imagine how they were strengthened by the critical events of the following year, and how he must have rejoiced in the Whig victory, to which his efforts had so largely contributed. For him, as well as for England, change was now at hand. Before war was declared, and while the national temper was still on his side, the much striving, much enduring William III. passed away.

[1] "What is England without its trade, without its plantation trade, Turkey trade, and Spanish trade, and where will that be when a French garrison is planted at Cadiz, and the French fleet brings home the plate from Havana?"—"*The Two Great Questions Considered*, p. 16.

IV.

DEFOE AND CHURCH QUESTIONS: THE EARLY YEARS OF ANNE'S REIGN. 1702—1705.

Accession of Anne.

WITH his royal patron and friend, Defoe lost much of what had hitherto made his life prosperous. The Glass Duty was abolished in 1699; at the accession of Anne, therefore, Defoe was, so far as we know, without Government employment or reward, and dependent for his subsistence partly on the pantile works at Tilbury and partly on the sale of his writings. He was now a married man with children,[1] and it must have been a matter of some anxiety to him as one fitted for public life and habituated to it to know what would be the result to his prospects of the change of Sovereigns. The results to the State were by no means unimportant. They may be summed up in saying that the new occupant of the throne was a woman, a daughter of James II., and a strong High Church Anglican. Her family connexion led to a reappearance of the more Jacobite feeling; her sex, to the increased influence of ministers, and especially to the immense power of Marlborough; while her ecclesiastical sympathies aided a startling manifestation of Anglican intolerance. The rejoicings in the Queen's Stewart connexion took forms which were not always respectful to the memory of King William; and against such Defoe directed his poem, *The Mock Mourners: a Satire by way of Elegy on King William*, a production which had a large sale.

Its effects on Defoe,

and on the State.

Power of Marlborough.

In the new ecclesiastical situation Defoe took an active interest. The chief point of the situation was that the Church of England, having, by the help of the Nonconformists, prevented the establishment of Romanism and secured the Protestant succession, was now resolved to re-assert itself strenuously as holding the *via media*, and, in a spirit of rigid exclusiveness, to enforce the letter of the law against Dissenters. The immediately pressing question was furnished by the evasions of the Corporation and Test Acts frequently practised by Nonconformists, who satisfied the Statutes by taking the Sacrament according to the ritual of the Church of England, while at the same time they

Increasing exclusiveness of the Church of England.

[1] Defoe seems to have had eight children in all, and to have been only once married, viz., to Mary Tuffley.—See *Contemporary Review*, Feb., 1890.

remained adherents of their Dissenting communities. This practice of "occasional conformity," as it was called, naturally drew forth severe disapprobation from High Church Anglicans. What at first seems strange is, that it also greatly dipleased the Nonconformist Defoe. In 1697 the Lord Mayor of London, who was a Presbyterian and a confirmed occasional conformist, had gone in state to a certain meeting-house called Pinner's Hall, having the City *regalia* carried before him. This act was sharply blamed by Defoe, who wrote an anonymous *Discourse upon Occasional Conformity*, with a preface addressed to the Lord Mayor, calling him to account for conduct so inconsistent, and asserting that it was impossible for him to "worship God one way in the morning and another in the afternoon." The *Discourse* argued elaborately that separation from the Established Church, except for conscience's sake, was sinful, and that conscientious separation must be complete and permanent. It was thus as impossible to worship both in church and chapel as to serve God and Baal, while to make communicating a civil as distinguished from a religious act was to be guilty of blasphemy.[1]

1697.

Defoe on occasional conformity.

His relation to the question.

Queen Anne's first Ministry directed its energies against this particular abuse, and an Occasional Conformity Bill was introduced in the autumn of 1702. Was this what Defoe wanted or expected? What line was he to take? He had openly and consistently professed Nonconformity, and, notwithstanding repudiations of party connexion, he had identified himself with a Whig policy. The Occasional Conformity Bill was brought in under the auspices of High Anglicans and Tories, and it was intended to undo all that the spirit of toleration had already done. Defoe's relation to the new measure was characteristic of his versatility and ingenuity. He contrived to bless and curse the Bill in a breath. He asserted that the host of pamphleteers and preachers for and against it misunderstood its real character. The hot-headed ecclesiastical "high-fliers," of whom Sacheverell was the type, believed it to be the first of a series of measures which should stamp out dissent like a pestilence, while hot-headed Dissenters saw in it the beginning of their ruin. Defoe argued that both sides were wrong, and that he alone was right.[2] The Bill was badly meant, indeed; it was the work of the enemy, but it would turn out for good. It would destroy the *political* Dissenter, who was ready to climb to preferment by profaning the altar; and the sooner he was destroyed the better. The conscientious Nonconformist would be unaffected by it, except in so far as temptation

[1] "This is playing bo-peep with God Almighty."

[2] See *Inquiry into Occasional Conformity*.—Hazlitt's Defoe, iii.

to purchase worldly success by unworthy concession would be taken away from him.

Having thus cleared his consistency, Defoe was free to take his stand with his co-religionists in the struggle against the High Church party. From his copious comments three years later, during the election of 1705, we find out how his opinions on the political aspects of Church and Dissent had defined themselves. The occasional conformist was still an object of disapprobation, partly because the motive of his conformity was worldly self-advancement,[1] but chiefly because his indifferentism proved him to be no true friend of the settlement in Church and State effected at the Revolution, and confirmed on the accession of Anne. Of that settlement, toleration, in Defoe's opinion, was an essential feature. It was the absence of toleration which led to the beginnings of dissent; it was the *illegality*, as he called it, "of making religious distinction a term of qualification for civil employments."[2] But the Toleration Act had done a great deal, and, when tests were abolished, the entire grievance would be removed.[3] There was now no reason why the Nonconformist should regard himself or should be regarded by others as the *enemy* of the Established Church; though he conscientiously objected to certain of its observances, he was at one with it on the all-important basis of the Act of Settlement, with its fundamental condition of Protestantism. According to Defoe, Protestantism, threatened as it was by Franco-Jacobite intrigues, was the common element of Churchman and Dissenter; and patriotic needs made it imperative that in that element they should cordially work together. Each was essential to the other. "If the Church of England was divided, broken, or suppressed, the Dissenters could not be able to defend themselves against Popery and Jacobitism;"[4] while, on the other hand, "Wo be to the Church if Jacobites, Non-Jurants, and Tackers must hold her up."[5] Now, Defoe realized that against the Protestant Settlement a great conspiracy was on foot, with its centre at Jacobite head quarters in France; and he came to hold that both the promoters of the Occasional Conformity Bill and the occasional conformists themselves were more or less avowed agents of this anti-patriotic conspiracy.[6]

The House of Commons in which the Occasional Conformity Bill was introduced and passed was, of course, a Tory one; but the House of Lords had a large Whig majority, and it amended the Bill so radically that the

[1] *Review*, ii., p. 443. [2] Ib., ib. [3] Ib., p. 147. [4] Ib., p. 154. [5] Ib., p. 234.
[6] Ib., pp. 307—370. "This is the consequence of Occasional Conformity . . . taking the oaths with a reserve and a design, the better to propagate the interest and aims of a banished and abdicated race."—p. 323.

Commons were dissatisfied, and dropped it for the session. Meanwhile the tone of the "high-fliers" was becoming more and more menacing. Defoe now took a step which plunged him into misfortune for many a day, and which has given its most vivid chapter to the story of his life. Men of all parties were amazed by the appearance at the end of the year of a pamphlet bearing the title, *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters; or Proposals for the Establishment of the Church.* This *brochure* professed to be written in the interests of the Established Church, and in the tone of its most uncompromising supporters. For fourteen years, that is to say ever since the Revolution, the purest church in the world has been "eclipsed, buffeted, and disturbed" by Nonconformity. Now at last a true friend of the Church is on the throne, and it is time to root out the viperous brood that have so long sucked the blood of their mother. To do so would not be cruelty, but true mercy; for we destroy "serpents, toads, vipers, &c.," for the sake of our neighbours, to prevent the evil they may do. "How many millions of future souls we save from infection and delusion if the present race of poisoned spirits were purged from the face of the land!" The means of effecting this reform are simple. "If one severe law were made and punctually executed, that whoever was found at a conventicle should be banished the nation, and the preacher be hanged, we should soon see an end of the tale." How dare the people be supine as to this matter? "Alas! the Church of England. What with Popery on one hand and schismatics on the other, how has she been crucified between two thieves! Now let us crucify the thieves."

1702.

The Shortest Way.

Defoe writes in the character of a high-flier.

Perhaps, in his polemic against occasional conforming, Defoe had under-estimated the strength of Anglican sentiment, and was now, in adjusting his position to the circumstances of the new reign, tempted to overdo his part. The clever *jeu d'esprit* from which we have just quoted caused a general consternation which surprises us in these days. The authorship was not known at first. The Dissenters, who distrusted Defoe's fidelity, were alarmed by the pamphlet; and when they knew who had written it they were disgusted and angry. The High Churchmen began by welcoming it;[1]

Effect of the *Shortest Way.*

[1] Lee's Defoe, i., 67. In his *Review* Defoe gives an amusing instance of Anglican approbation of *The Shortest Way*. "A gentleman of that (the High Church) party, whose eyes were shut by his zeal from discerning the bottom, gave the following answer to a certain bookseller in London who sent him the book:—'Sir, I received yours and inclosed the book entitled, *The Shortest Way*, &c., a book which, next to the Holy Bible and Sacred Comments, I esteem as the most valuable piece I have; and I pray God put it into the heart of the Queen to put all that is there prescribed into execution.'"—*Review* ii., p. 279.

then, when its satirical character came out, they turned vehemently against the author. Defoe by his over-cleverness had stirred a hornet's nest. The High Church feeling in Anne's first Tory Ministry induced them to prosecute the luckless pamphleteer, who had already retired into concealment. An advertisement for him appeared in the *London Gazette* of January 10th, 1703, including the often quoted description of his appearance, which, as one of the few bright gleams on a personality which at the best remains dim, deserves to be quoted again:— 1703.

Defoe advertised for.

"Whereas Daniel De Foe, alias De Fowe, is charged with writing a scandalous and seditious pamphlet, intitled *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*. He is a middle-sized spare man, about forty years old, of a brown complexion, and dark brown coloured hair, but wears a wig; a hooked nose, a sharp chin, grey eyes, and a large mole near his mouth; was born in London, and for many years was a hose-factor in Freeman's Yard, in Cornhill; and now is owner of the brick and pantile works near Tilbury Fort, in Essex. Whoever shall discover the said Daniel De Foe to one of her Majesty's justices of the peace, so he may be apprehended, shall have a reward of £50, which her Majesty has ordered to be immediately paid on such discovery."

Realizing what had happened, Defoe provided a "brief explanation" of the *Shortest Way*, expressing his surprise, a surprise in which we, his modern readers, may well share, that any explanation of his banter on the high-fliers was needed. But the Government were committed to prosecution; the indictment was issued on the 24th February, and on the 26th the *Shortest Way* was burned by the common hangman in New Palace Yard, on the order of the House of Commons. Defoe at once surrendered himself, and was lodged in Newgate to await his trial at the Old Bailey. The trial came on in July; Defoe, possibly from a feeling of haughty disgust, attempted no defence; the jury found him guilty of a seditious libel, and he was sentenced to pay a fine of 200 marks, to stand three times in the pillory, to be imprisoned during the Queen's pleasure, and to find sureties for his good behaviour for seven years.[1]

The tract burned.

Defoe's sentence.

Thus was Defoe, in his own words, made to see the rough side of the world as well as the smooth, and to taste in half a year "the difference between the closet of a King and the dungeon of Newgate." The sentence was relentlessly carried out. In his hour of disgrace, the author of *The True Born Englishman* had still the London populace on his side. During the three pilloryings, before the Exchange, in Cheap-

[1] Lee's Defoe i., 70.

Defoe's popularity.

side and at Temple Bar, instead of being a mark for insult, he was the hero of a triumph. The mob garlanded the pillory with flowers, drank to the health of the victim, and crowded round him with refreshments when the show was over. From the pillory he was taken to spend a year within the walls of Newgate, and, dauntless in spirit and good humour, he flung forth a *Hymn to the Pillory*, which, written in a rough metre and without either real humour, or the vigor and point which mark the *True Born Englishman*, caught the taste of the day and circulated widely. There is no bitterness in his apostrophe to the "hieroglyphic State machine," "the swelling stage," "the penitential stools," "the great monster of the law;" no fear in the bold picture of the "fam'd Sacheverell" standing "with trumpet of sedition in his hand" where his enemy now stood; no inconsistency in the award of similar punishment to

Hymn to the Pillory.

> "All the statesmen
> Who guide us with unsteady hand,
> Who armies, fleet, and men betray,
> And ruin all the shortest way."

Of himself, he speaks with passionless assurance. He calls on the pillory to

> "Tell us who 'tis upon thy ridge stands thus,
> So full of fault, and yet so void of fear.
> . . . . . .
> Tell them it was because he was too bold,
> And told those truths that should not ha' been told;
> Extol the justice of the land,
> Who punish what they will not understand.
> . . . . . .
> Tell 'em the men that placed him here,
> Are friends unto the times,
> But at a loss to find his guile
> They can't commit his crimes."

Defoe in Newgate.

Yet his situation was serious enough. The pantile works at Tilbury could not be kept going without the superintendence of their owner; they were his chief source of income, and he had a wife and children to support. He had startled and offended his Nonconformist brethren, and made enemies of those in high place; such a complete reverse of fortune would have been the undoing of many men. Yet not only was this incarceration of 1703-4 no interruption in Defoe's literary life, but it was the occasion of a new development of it, which was also an epoch in English literature and in the life of society. Not content with vigorously carrying on the Church-controversy with the pen, ink, and paper allowed him in his cell, he planned and commenced that wonderful *Review*,—at first nominally and exclusively of the

affairs of France,[1] but afterwards of all things bearing on the social, commercial, and political life of England,—which is perhaps the most striking monument of his genius. It was in the form of a dissertation,—what we should now-a-days call a long leading article—on a definite subject, followed up, for a time at least, to promote its sale, with lighter matter in the shape of tittle-tattle on current events and scandals, called *Mercure Scandale*,[2] or *Advice from the Scandalous Club*. The first number was issued from Newgate on February 19th, 1704; and it continued to appear, first weekly, then bi-weekly, then tri-weekly, and finally bi-weekly again, until its final cessation in June, 1713.[3] Every word of all this matter was contributed by Defoe; there is no break in the continuity; in whatever circumstances he might be, and however much besides he might publish, the *Review*, with its clear reasoning, its multifarious knowledge, and its easy pellucid style, made its regular appearance. The exact place of this work in the history of journalism, it does not seem difficult to ascertain. In its earliest form, that of a brief summary of news, foreign and domestic, the English periodical newspaper dates from the first quarter of the seventeenth century. The chief distinguishing feature of this form,—of which the *London Gazette* became, some years after the Restoration, the typical example,—was the absence of comment, or of more reflexion than was needed to supply a logical thread on which to string the recorded events. As the Revolution approached, newspapers of this kind were greatly multiplied; while the comment on and discussion of public affairs, which they were slow in admitting, found a means of expression in the occasional tract or pamphlet, which kind of composition had a wonderful development in the seventeenth century, and had been made classical by Milton. What was wanted in order to create the newspaper as we know it, was to shorten the pamphlet, and bring it out periodically along with the record of news,—in other words to invent the *leading article*. The first step towards this result seems to have been

Begins the *Review*.

[1] The history of the title is worthy noticing precisely. Vol. i. (Feb., 1704—Feb., 1705) is entitled, "A Review of the affairs of France and of all Europe as Influenced by that Nation, etc." Vol. ii. (1705), "A Review of the Affairs of France, with Observations on Transactions at Home." Vol. iii. (1706) is "A Review of the State of the English Nation;" while vols. iv., v., vi., vii., viii. (1707—1712) (as was to be expected after the Union with Scotland in the work of an enthusiast for it) are called "A Review of the State of the British Nation."

[2] Defoe's enemies accused him of writing in the interests of the French, because he expounded their national and political importance; and on account of the carping of the *Courant*, he soon changed the name "Mercure Scandale" into "Advice from the Scandalous Club."—*Review* i., p. 87.

[3] The first series of the *Review*, extending to eight volumes, came to an end in 1712, on the imposition of the stamp-duty on newspapers. A second series was begun in August, 1712, and was continued till June, 1713.

taken by Roger L'Estrange, who in April, 1681, issued the first number of a periodical paper called the *Observator*, which went on for six years, and consisted of political discussion in the form of dialogue, without any summary of news. This novel adaptation of the pamphlet seems to have been considered at first a daring innovation,[1] but it turned out to be a well-timed and well-considered device. Nine years after the *Observator*, in its first form, came to an end, the fusion of leading article and newspaper took place in the shape of a
1696. production called *Pegasus*, "being an history of the most remarkable events which have happened in Europe, but more especially in England, with observations thereupon."[2] The projector announced that his object was "not only to furnish intelligence as others do, but also by an Observator to enable those who are liable to be imposed upon to make a truer judgment of the state of affairs."

One more step, and we are on the threshold of the *Review*. *Pegasus* had but a short life; but in 1702 the *Observator* began to appear again in its original dialogue-form, under the management of a certain John Tutchin, one of the pamphleteers of the day. It was continued for several years, and Tutchin became one of Defoe's many rivals and enemies.[3]

When we follow this line of research, and compare L'Estrange's violent word-combats, and the spasmodic and trivial comments of *Pegasus*, with the sustained vigour, variety, and grace of the *Review*, we are in a position to conclude that Defoe, if not formally the inventor of the leading article, and, as such, the creator of modern journalism, was, at all events, the first to discover its capacities, the first to use it with high intelligence, the first to make it a classic. As to the lighter appended matter, whether called Mercure Scandale, Advice from the Scandalous Club, or Miscellanea, our author's position was very much the same. It was the parent of the modern "article" on general subjects, ranging, as it does, from the gossip of the so-called society paper to the most refined criticism of life, manners, or literature. As the author of the *Review* had forerunners in the authors of the

[1] In the first number the author is asked by one of his astonished public, "Do you think now to bring men to their wits again with a pamphlet?" (See *Observator*).

[2] There are several numbers of *Pegasus* in the great Burney Collection of newspapers in the British Museum. The last number is dated September 14th, 1696.

[3] It was this Tutchin, of the *Observator*, who sneered at Defoe's want of learning, and was challenged by him "to translate . . any Latin, French, or Italian author, and, after that, to re-translate them crossways for £20 each book; and by this he shall have an opportunity to show how much De Foe, the hosier, is inferior to Mr. Tutchin, the gentleman."—*Review* ii., 149, 150.

Observator and *Pegasus*, so had the author of the *Advice from the Scandalous Club*, in the eccentric John Dunton, who produced (1690-91 to 1695-96) a weekly issue of questions and answers on all subjects, sacred and profane, under the ambitious title of the *Athenian Gazette or Casuistical Mercury*. In both kinds the form, or something like the form, was given to Defoe; in both, the content and the life came from him. The great journalists who were so soon to appear in the field, the Swifts, the Bolingbrokes, the Steeles, the Addisons, with their vast spiritual progeny who almost overwhelm us to-day, had their real first parent in the author of the *True Born Englishman* and the *Shortest Way*, the hero of the pillory, the irrepressible Newgate prisoner. If not the first of professed journals, the *Review* was at least the first of famous ones; and it is the only famous one entirely written by the same hand and maintaining literary dignity throughout.

Disappearance of extreme Tories.

The country could not long spare Defoe to literary leisure in gaol. The Queen was becoming alienated from Seymour, Nottingham, and the other extreme Tories whom she had favoured at her accession. This was chiefly through the influence of Marlborough, who, as at once a great general and a great Minister, naturally inclined her in favour of the supporters of the war, who were not to be found among the extreme Tories.[1] In the spring of 1704 a number of these were driven out and moderate Tories substituted, chief among whom was Robert Harley, Speaker of the House of Commons, who was made Secretary of State. It is probable that Harley at once pointed out to the Queen the evil of the exasperating policy of the late Ministers towards the Nonconformists, and that, in anticipation of a more modern view of merit, he recommended her not to waste such a force as that of the author of the *Legion Memorial*, but to utilize it in the Government.

Harley helps Defoe.

Certain it is that Harley had been but a short time in office when a messenger from him arrived at Newgate, asked to see Defoe, and informed him that he had been sent by the Secretary of State to ask what he could do for him. Defoe replied by writing out the story of the blind man in the Gospel, ending with the words: "Lord, that I may receive my sight." This curious little incident probably took place in April, 1704.[2] Four months longer Defoe remained in Newgate: and in the meantime Harley interested the Queen in his case. It is greatly to her credit that she did not allow her prejudices as a churchwoman to overcome her sense of justice towards the ill-treated Dissenter. She enquired into the circumstances of

[1] "These declared that the nation cared more for the passing of the Bill against Occasional Conformity than for all the allies on the Continent." —Ranke's *History of England*, v., 319.

[2] Lee's Defoe i., 91.

Release.

his family, and sent through Godolphin, the Lord Treasurer, a provision for his wife and children, as well as money to pay his fine and the expenses of his discharge.[1] In the month of August he was released.

[1] *Appeal to Honour and Justice*, pp. 5, 6.

V.

DEFOE AND THE UNION: THE PROGRESS OF ANNE'S REIGN. 1704—1709.

AFTER his release, Defoe went for a short time to Bury St. Edmunds, to recruit himself for the work which remained for him to do. The prospect of passing the Occasional Conformity Bill seemed more distant than ever. The high Tories and high Churchmen remained wedded to the measure, and endeavoured to force it on the country by "tacking" it to money-bills, which the House of Lords could not constitutionally reject. Defoe supported the Whig and moderate Tory sections in opposing this course, and wrote strenuously in the *Review* against both "Tackers" and "High Fliers." In other ways also, he took part in the preparation for a general election, which followed the dissolution of 1705. He had come out of prison a broken man, broken in health and broken in fortunes, with wife and children dependent on royal bounty for subsistence. It was not to throw him on the world as a penniless pamphleteer and then forget him, that Harley had procured his release. After a short interval, we find Defoe in communication both with Halifax and Godolphin, and in confidential relations with Harley. His pecuniary difficulties were great and his creditors urgent; and he made up his mind to leave London (as once before in the like circumstances he had done), that he might be "beyond the reach of implacable and unreasonable men." As once before, he was delivered from impending ruin by help of the highest in the land. "The Queen," he tells us, "had the goodness to think of taking me into her service, and I had the honour to be employed in several honourable, though secret, services, by the interposition of my first benefactor." What these services precisely were, Defoe was always careful to conceal; but it is probable that the first of them was an electioneering tour in the south-western counties to win votes for the Government, and that for this Defoe left London. He certainly spent the autumn of the year in making a riding-tour of inspection,[1] out of which came secret letters to Harley. His efforts were rewarded with success, and a large Whig majority was sent up to the new Parliament. The Occasional Conformity Bill

Tories begins 'tacking.'

Defoe employed by the Government.

Works in the provinces during the elections.

[1] "Near 1,100 miles riding."—*Review* ii., p. 378.

1705. was rejected a third time, and the general election returned a decided Whig majority. A more important question than occasional conformity was coming to the front, in connexion with which Defoe was to figure not as a critic merely, but as a statesman and historian.

Scottish questions

The benefits which might have been expected to arise from the union of Scotland and England under one Crown had been hindered, so far as Scotland was concerned, by the political and ecclesiastical convulsions of the seventeenth century. After the pacification of Scotland by William III. the relations of the two countries became a matter of importance and difficulty. Legislative separation was a disadvantage both to the larger and the smaller country; to England, because, with a Parliament of her own, Scotland was a separate nationality and a nest of probable disaffection; to Scotland, because with independence she had to combine exclusion from the commercial advantages of her rich neighbour. A legislative union was a cherished scheme of William III., but Scottish independence of spirit and English jealousy delayed it for years. After the accession of Anne it was hurried on by commercial considerations. Scotland was a poor country; but, though she did not share largely in the wealth of the world, she earnestly desired to do so, and her sons had no lack of energy. It was towards the growth of the commercial spirit on the other side of the Tweed that English jealousy showed itself most hostile. It is impossible here to trace that growth in detail—to dwell on the economic suggestions of Andrew Fletcher and William Paterson, or to rehearse the dramatic and exasperating story of the Darien Company. The situation was made very critical by the withdrawal of the English subscriptions to that Company,[1] and by English disapprobation of the Scottish adventure. These things happened before William III.'s death; to the far-seeing statesmen who counselled his successor it was evident that they gave rise to an intolerable friction. The Scots met English coldness with the most formidable and apparently implacable hostility, which in 1704 produced an Act of Security providing that the successor to the Scottish Crown should on no acocunt be the same person as the successor to the English one. The English retaliated by passing an Alien Act (repealed in the following year) by which the Scots were forbidden to trade with England in any way. This was the climax, and in the following year negotiations for a legislative union were fairly set on foot by the appointment of Commissioners on each side. The only possible alternative was war.[2]

Delay of legislative union.

[1] See Hill Burton's *History of Scotland*, vol. viii.
[2] *Review* iii., p. 470.

Defoe and the Union.

This matter of the Anglo-Scottish relations was one eminently suited to Defoe's temperament, and to the line which his thoughts and sympathies were following. Inasmuch as a legislative union was at once necessitated and retarded by economic ambitions and jealousies, the question fell in with the general commercial interests of England, with which Defoe had long concerned himself. Again, the idea of bringing into bonds of fraternity two mutually suspicious nationalities, of whom the smaller and weaker had been the subject of irrational prejudice, appealed to a prominent side of Defoe's character—to his fairness, reasonableness, and love of peace;[1] while the religious difficulty was easily understood by one who was both a Nonconformist and an apostle of toleration. Above all, the precipitation of the crisis took place under the auspices of the "Tacking Parliament," against which Defoe had been fighting so strenuously;[2] and what policy could more fitly follow the new election and the change of Ministers than one by which the northern Jacobites would be outwitted, and Scotland enlisted on the side of England and the Protestant succession? Immediately after the Commissioners met, Defoe published an *Essay at Removing National Prejudices against a Union with Scotland*. In July the Commissioners had their Articles of Union ready for submission to the Parliaments of both countries, and soon after Defoe started for Edinburgh,[3] having apparently kissed hands on his appointment as an accredited agent to help in the delicate negotiations which were to follow.[4]

May, 1706.

From this time until he published his *History of the Union* in 1709, and other matters claimed his attention, Defoe threw himself heart and soul into the cause. By constant writing in the *Review*, by his poem called *Caledonia*, and by various pamphlets, he brought the matter to its true issue, and showed that ruin to Scotland and the gravest risk to England would be the inevitable result of continued separation.[5] If the dedication of *Caledonia* was too flatter-

1706—1709.

[1] "I am . . . the first man that ever attempted to rescue Scotland out of the jaws of slander, the grave of her character, and the gulph in which all the great actions of her nobility and gentry are too much buried." (*Caledonia*: Dedication to the Duke of Queensberry). "I wrote two Essays against National Prejudices in England while the Treaty was in agitation there, and four more in Scotland, while it was debating in Scotland by the Parliament there."—*Review* iii., Pref.

[2] *History of the Union*, pp. 89, 90.

[3] "Nor did I think my time or labour ill-bestowed to take a long, a tedious, and hazardous journey thither."—*Ib.*, *ib.*

[4] *Appeal to Honour and Justice*, p. 6.

[5] If there was not union, he argued, there must be war; and if England should succeed in such a war she would suffer a moral defeat.—*Review*, iii., p. 478.

ing to the Scots, he struck the right note when in the poem itself he attributed Scotland's depression to her poverty,—

> "Wake, Scotland, from thy long lethargic dream,
> Seem what thou art, and be what thou shalt seem,
> Shake off the poverty, the sloth will die;
> Success alone can quicken industry."

Scotland had wealth in her soil, industry in the wills of her sons. All that was wanted was incorporation with England:

> "Nothing remains to make her wealth complete
> But that her right hand and her left may meet."

The discussion of the question in the third and fourth volumes of the *Review*, taken along with the pamphlets bearing on it and the argumentative parts of the *History*, forms the most powerful existing defence of a great historic change. For us, who have seen its results for nearly two hundred years, the change needs no defence; but before it happened, it was seriously dreaded and opposed. The fitness of the subject to Defoe is quite dramatically striking; though, indeed, it would be hard to find a subject wholly alien from his capable intelligence. During the elections of 1705, he set himself to do a definite thing—namely, to work against the Jacobite form of Toryism which he believed to be threatening the Revolution settlement in the guise of zeal for the English Church; and to do so by preaching peace and moderation, union and tolerance—in other words, by treating public questions from a point of view which was national and human, rather than one which was factious and sectarian.[1] To one so disposed the Anglo-Scottish relations were a god-send. Unity and tolerance, which hitherto he had been treating more or less as abstractions, he was now able to deal with in the concrete. The Union, he said, is opposed by some (i.) because it is a Union and they hate unity; (ii.) because it is a Scottish union and they hate Scotland, and especially the Scottish Kirk.[2] Defoe was too magnanimous, too passionless, too modern to be even slightly influenced by the national prejudice; while, notwithstanding his essential tolerance, his sympathies in the Church-controversy can hardly have been with Prelacy as it then showed itself, even when it was confronted by what he probably regarded as a counter-fanaticism. Against Anglican and Presbyterian objectors alike he maintained that union would help both Churches without injuring either. It would neither introduce Popery into Scotland in the wake of Prelacy, nor into England in connexion with a subtle form of Gallicanism.[3]

[1] *Review* ii., Pref. [2] Ib. iii., p. 478.

[3] "Have they (the Scots) established Presbytery to bring in Romish Tyranny?"—*Review* iii., p. 486. It must always be remembered that sympathy between France and Scotland had been of long standing, and was naturally the source of absurd as well as reasonable apprehensions.

On the contrary, it would bring about the affectionate junction of two sister-Churches, both Protestant; while sinister French influences would be destroyed and not fostered by the Union. The French would be losers and not gainers by it. France was immediately dangerous as the domicile of Jacobitism; and "Jacobitism," Defoe predicted, "will have its mortal stab in the conjunction of the kingdoms, and can never rise more."[1]

Such arguments seem obvious and commonplace to us, because we need no convincing. But even now we can thrill in response to the eloquent words, born of truest and clearest historic insight, by which the subject is removed for ever from the limits of petty controversy. "What work had Edward I. made in the world, a prince of that fire in his soul and fury in his hand; if—Scotland having been united under his sceptre—he had turned the whole force of that collected body against France, then grown very great . . . if it be true that 300,000 men lost their lives on both sides in the several long wars with Scotland during his reign, what must not such a Power, and under such a Captain, have done in the world?"[2]

Defoe in Scotland.

The Union was consummated in March, 1707, on terms of which Defoe heartily approved.[3] He remained in Scotland until January, 1708, partly, perhaps, to go on with his diplomatic work, and partly, there is no doubt, to be out of the way of his creditors. On his return to London he found what he calls a "fatal breach" in the Ministry he had hailed as the great result of the General Election of 1705. Jealousy of Marlborough and the increasingly aggressive attitude of the Whigs combined to oust Harley from the Secretaryship of State; with him went St. John; and Godolphin remained, though not himself a Whig, by virtue of Whig support. Defoe expected to be ruined in his patron's fall; but his good fortune did not desert him. He had an agreeable interview with Godolphin; kissed the royal hand for the second time; and returned to his diplomatic work in Scotland.

February, 1708. Harley's dismissal.

Threatened invasion of Scotland. March, 1708.

There was now an opportunity of testing the practical validity of what the legislature had just done; for a French invasion of Scotland, notoriously in the interests of the Jacobite faction, was threatened and on the point of being carried into effect. A French force in fact was off the Scottish coast; but the English were beforehand with the invaders, and as they held off, they were overtaken by a storm and driven back to France. The *Review* at this time is chiefly taken up with a loyal polemic against the Jacobites; and it is difficult

[1] *Review* iii., p. 498. [2] *Review* iii., p. 511.

[3] In the *Review* of Saturday, 29 March, 1707, he writes: "I have the pleasure, while I am writing these lines, to hear the guns proclaiming the happy conjunction from Edinburgh Castle."

to avoid the belief that this second Scottish mission of Defoe was undertaken with the object of counterplotting the rebels.

1709. In September he returned to London; and in the following year his *History of the Union* was published.

Defoe's statements as to his Scottish mission.

The autobiographical part of this portly volume certainly causes disquiet to those who would expect to find in Defoe a stainless candour and an absolute consistency; and what he says in the *Review* tends to increase it. In the *History* he represents his first journey to Scotland as undertaken spontaneously and out of mere curiosity; and repudiates the charge (which had been freely made) that he was employed to carry on the interest of any party.[1] In the *Review* he further and expressly denies that he was an agent,[2] affirming that all he did for the Union was done gratuitously out of pure Christian good-will. How is all this to be reconciled with the subsequent statement in the *Appeal to Honour and Justice*, that he was sent, first by Harley, and afterwards by Godolphin, straight from the audience-chamber of the Queen?

His duplicity.

It seems unnecessary to expend much subtilty in the discussion of the question. We cannot, it is to be feared, blink the fact that when Defoe denied that he was a government agent in Scotland he told a lie. He is, however, entitled to the benefit of the consideration that he was under an obligation of secresy as to the nature of his Scottish services, and that he may have erred chiefly by misconceiving the way in which that obligation was to be interpreted, and believing that it required mendacity as well as evasion. We live under purer conditions than those which surrounded public life at any time during the eighteenth century, and yet we have not reached the stage at which every form and degree of lying is considered fatal to political and journalistic reputation. Until we have made up our minds that no falsehood supposed to be in the public service is ever venial, we need not be forward to condemn Defoe. As we shall see, when he wrote the *Appeal to Honour and Justice* he had been prosecuted as unfaithful to the Protestant Succession; and he probably thought that then the time for a more complete candour had arrived. We may well believe also in the curiosity and spontaneous good-will with which the agent professed to enter on his mission of peace.

[1] *History of the Union*, p. 213.

[2] *Review* iii., Pref. "If paid . . . for writing, if hir'd, if employ'd, why still harass'd with merciless and malicious men. . . . Is this the figure the Agents of Courts and Princes make?"

VI.

DEFOE IN THE LATTER PART OF ANNE'S REIGN AND IN THE REIGN OF GEORGE I. 1709—1726.

Re-action against the Whigs.

We must now follow Defoe's fortunes into one of the wild whirls of faction which preceded the establishment of the regular party-system at the accession of George I. Since Harley's resignation influences hostile to the Whigs had been working on the Queen; and they, in their day of power, were disposed to a wrong-headedness which led to a violent reaction against their ascendency. By their conduct in the famous Sacheverell case they precipitated their downfall.

The Sacheverell incident.

Dr. Henry Sacheverell had long been known as one of the most violent preachers of High Church doctrine and political non-resistance. He was an old enemy of Defoe, who, as we have seen, would fain have had him in the pillory. In a sermon preached at St. Paul's before the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of the City of London, his characteristic opinions were strongly asserted. The sermon was published; and the Ministry forthwith committed the indiscretion of impeaching the high-flying doctor. He was found guilty and suspended for three years; but the matter did not end there. His punishment was so grossly disproportioned to his offence that the impeachment by the Whig Ministry roused every element of opposition in the nation. Defoe, with his usual sagacity, realized how foolish it would be to make much of the incident.

Defoe on the subject.

"I assure you," he wrote in his *Review*, "I shall be none of those that prompt you to resent the Doctor's ill-usage; and my reasons are, because the faster he runs, the sooner he will be out of breath; and because, by this method, the high-flying gentlemen really expose themselves, not you. . . . Upon the whole, I think the roaring of this beast ought to give you no manner of disturbance. You ought to laugh at it. . . ."[1]

The Tories in power.

It would have been well if the Government had looked at the affair in this light. As it was, they made Sacheverell into a popular hero, alienated the already disaffected Queen, and brought about a violent political crisis, the result of which was that Godolphin was dismissed, Harley and St.

[1] *Review* vi., pp. 421—2.

John recalled, and a purely Tory Ministry formed under Harley's leadership. It was an embarrassing situation for Defoe. A General Election followed the change of Ministry; and during its progress he laboured hard on the side of the Whigs.[1] But when a Tory majority was returned to support the administration, and when a Tory *régime* under Harley was fairly inaugurated, he took a view of his duty which has not added to his moral reputation. On the very day of Godolphin's dismissal Defoe waited on him, and asked his advice as to the course he should take in the changed circumstances. Godolphin advised him to regard himself as the Queen's servant and not as the servant of any particular Minister, and to take her Majesty's commands from those who should succeed him. From this advice Defoe tells us he derived the principle that it was not material to him what Minister her Majesty was pleased to employ; that his duty was to support every Ministry so far as they did not break in on the constitution and the laws and liberties of his country. And "by this," he adds, "I was providentially cast back on my original benefactor, who, according to his wonted goodness, was pleased to lay my case before her Majesty; and thereby I preserved my interest in her Majesty's favour, but without any engagement of service." In other words he, who had been the literary strength of the Whig party ever since the Revolution, became a supporter—without reward, possibly, and without definite pledges—of the first regular Tory administration which England had seen.

Defoe's attitude.

What is to be thought of Defoe's change of front?

It is easy, of course, to try such conduct by an ideal standard and condemn it; and it is difficult to see how Defoe's most painstaking and most eulogistic biographer finds in it no reason for modifying his unwaveringly high estimate of the man's public character. Before, however, we dismiss the matter and shut up our sympathy from Defoe, we ought to consider not only the difficulty of preserving what the world calls consistency in the stress of public life, but also the difficulty under a party-system of regulating the strength of party-ties. Parties are, after all, but means to an end; and there are times in almost every statesman's career when the means must be sacrificed to the end, which is patriotism. It must also be remembered that the party-system was not yet in full working; and was not recognized for what it really was. Parties still wore the air of factions, with personal motives and temporary aims; and to say that Harley was a Tory and that Defoe supported him is not necessarily to say anything very definite about Harley or very damaging to Defoe. What interests the historical student in the facts is much less their bearing on our

Party-principles as yet undecided.

[1] See *Review* vi. throughout. Also *Review* vii.

author's character than their bearing on the development of executive government in England under the changed conditions of the time. The problem was then, as it still is, to combine political continuity with national self-government; the responsibility of Ministers to public opinion, with that administrative firmness and independence without which public opinion meddles in politics only to injure and destroy. The most recent English experience goes to show that if we have advanced some way towards the solution of the problem, it has been rather by learning to sacrifice party-connexion to higher obligations of country and broad national requirement, than by intensifying party-fidelity into a kind of religion. And if, now and afterwards, we cannot acquit Defoe of selfishness, special pleading and equivocation, we may at least recognize that as a social and political thinker he was always much more than a party-man. When, during the faction-fight of 1705, he hit upon the idea of "Party-Peace" as the comprehensive cure for the nation's ills, he was evidently seriously alarmed by the *quasi*-anarchical aspect of affairs under a woman's rule. Now, five years later, there was still serious ground for alarm.

Effect on the Funds.

The moment was, in truth, a critical one in the history of parties. The nation was hardly ripe for the sweeping Ministerial changes of 1710; nor had it been long accustomed to a large system of public credit. The consequence was that considerable financial disquiet and uncertainty followed the political disturbance. Defoe did something to justify the *rôle* he was now playing by publishing two pamphlets—one an *Essay upon Public Credit*, the other an *Essay on Loans*—to show that a national self-sufficiency and continuity underlay all executive changes,[1] and that upon these, and not on the stability of Ministers, the public creditor must rely. Nothing that he said or did, however, could persuade the Whigs that he was anything but a renegade, or had any admixture of better motives than self-interest. They objected to his teaching the duty of accepting the inevitable in connection with the Peace of Utrecht; and there certainly was a suspicious change in his tone about the war after Harley's accession to office which agreed ominously with the Minister's underhand dealings with France. It was just after the Peace that the storm which had been gathering burst on Defoe's head. He had been in Scotland; and, struck by the hold which Jacobitism had in the North, he resolved to alarm his fellow-countrymen by the method he had adopted in the *Shortest Way with the Dissenters*. He issued a series of

Essay on Credit.

Essay on Loans.

1713. The Whigs prosecute Defoe.

[1] As he put it, "the public credit . . . depends upon the Queen and Parliament entirely, and not at all upon the well or ill management of the officers of what kind soever."

pamphlets, called respectively: *Reasons against the Succession of the House of Hanover, What if the Pretender should come?* and *What if the Queen should die?* the titles of which were certainly calculated to startle those who were loyal to the Act of Settlement. The titles, however, were chosen in the purest irony, and the contents were thoroughly Hanoverian, though written with an ingenious duplicity of reference which served to perplex thorough going partisans. Defoe's object, whether interested or disinterested, clearly was to help Harley, and to persuade the public that he was not intriguing with the Jacobites. The effect of these pamphlets on Defoe himself was the same as that of the *Shortest Way*. They had a large sale, and enraged both parties. "Had the Pretender come to the throne," Defoe wrote afterwards, "I could have expected nothing but death, and all the ignominy and reproach that the most inveterate enemy of his person and claim could be supposed to suffer."[1] At the instigation of the Whigs a prosecution for libel was prepared against him; he was tried by the Queen's Bench; found guilty of a treasonable libel and sent to gaol. Once more he received succour directly from the "fountain of justice." An appeal to the Queen's clemency procured a complete pardon under the royal seal, and Defoe was again a free man.[2]

1713.

He is pardoned under the Royal Seal.

We must content ourselves with a rapid glance at the vicissitudes that followed. Though Defoe was free, he had not emerged into popularity or security. On the contrary, troubles thickened around him. His position as a journalist was becoming uncertain and complicated. The imposition of a stamp-tax in 1712 led him after a time to discontinue the *Review*. He then became connected with *Mercator* and the *Flying Post*, of which the former was devoted to the interests of Harley (Lord Oxford) and the latter was Whig. His fortunes were for the moment identified with Oxford's; and Oxford's sun was setting. Just before his patron's fall, Defoe saved the credit of his Hanoverian principles. Queen Anne died on August 1st, 1714; and on the 14th Defoe published in the *Flying Post* a *eulogium* on George I., which is a tribute to his powers of rhetoric, if to nothing else.[3] He afterwards accused Lord Anglesey (who had been sent to Ireland by Bolingbroke) of Jacobite designs on the forces

Mercator and *The Flying Post*.

The Queen's death.

[1] *Appeal to Honour and Justice*, p. 9.

[2] Ib., p. 11. The pardon was signed by Bolingbroke, and dated 20th November, 1713.

[3] "He will fully answer the Expectations, nay the very wishes of the People of England. . . . His Person is comely and grave, his countenance has majesty and sweetness so mixt, that nothing can be better suited to the Throne of a King . . . he is born for Council and fitted to command the World," and so on. Defoe wrote in the character of one who had been resident at the Court of Hanover for twelve years.

there. Anglesey was one of the Regents appointed to carry on the government until the new King's arrival from Germany; and the accusation was treated as a libel. Defoe was prosecuted, along with the printer and publisher of the *Flying Post*, and then let out on bail. At this time (1714—15) he seems to have written his great apology, the *Appeal to Honour and Justice*, and, amongst other things, the *Secret History of the White Staff*, a loyal attempt to explain away Oxford's dismissal from office.

Libel on Anglesey. Defoe again prosecuted.

For the arrival of George I. was almost immediately followed by the transference of power to the party who were free from suspicion of favouring the Pretender. Bolingbroke had fled, and actually joined the Pretender. Oxford was apprehended and sent to the Tower under a process of impeachment which came to nothing. Singularly enough, he did not appreciate Defoe's apparently single-minded effort in his behalf. He had been credited with the authorship of the *White Staff* and another pamphlet in the same strain; and he wrote from the Tower a formal disavowal of the tracts, and an expression of his belief that they had been written "to his prejudice."[1]

Defoe's fall.

Defoe was tried in July, 1715 and found guilty; but sentence was deferred till the next term.[2] In November, when he was called for to receive sentence, he was not forthcoming. Stranger still, nothing more was heard of him or of his case in Court. The men who had been associated with him in the *Flying Post* received their sentence, but where was Defoe?

Defoe tried and found guilty.

He does not appear for sentence.

Until the year 1864 it was impossible to answer this question. The general belief up to that date was that in some unrecorded way Defoe had received another pardon, and forthwith retired into domestic life and novel-writing. In his *Vision of the Angelic World*, there is a mysterious passage describing the case of a man against whom a verdict had been given, and who had no way of escape from punishment except flight, which would mean ruin to his wife and children. On waking one morning he felt "a strong impulse" which seemed to take words and say: *Write a letter to them!* The words were repeated again and again until at last he questioned: *Who shall I write to?*—when the Voice answered: *Write to the Judge!* Whereupon the man took pen, ink and paper, and, as we should have expected, "he wanted not words." The Judge was so moved by the eloquence that he stopped the prosecution, and the man was restored "to his Liberty and to his Family."[3] Students of Defoe speculated as to whether all this could be autobiographical.[4]

Vision of the Angelic World.

[1] Lee's Defoe i., 241. [2] Ib., 252. [3] *Vision of the Angelic World*, pp. 48—50.
[4] Wilson's Life of Defoe, iii., p. 556.

The true story.

In 1864 Mr. Lee discovered evidence which showed that the mysterious experience summarised above represented, with but little aid from fancy, a very real transaction with no mystery in it at all. Defoe, it seems, had actually written in his extremity to Lord Chief Justice Parker, who had been on the Bench during his prosecution in the previous year; and the Judge, convinced of Defoe's sufficient loyalty throughout, procured the suspension of the proceedings, and introduced the indispensable journalist to Lord Townshend, since 1714 Secretary of State. Six letters in Defoe's handwriting exist among the Public Records which prove that the introduction to the Minister was a fruitful one. They are addressed to a certain Charles de la Faye (who was probably a clerk in Townshend's office) and describe how the Secretary of State suggested that Defoe should enter into the service of the Government, while holding out that he was still "separated from the Whigs." The object of this fresh piece of secret service was partly that the Government might have a spy at hand to kill disaffection and sedition by stopping obnoxious writings at the press; and partly that so astoundingly ingenious a writer as Defoe might, as he put it, "take the sting out of" Tory journals by writing for them in friendly guise.[1] In accordance with this singular and by no means creditable treaty, Defoe became connected with journal after journal; first *Mercurius Politicus;* then the High Church *News-Letter*, formerly managed by Dormer; the Tory *Applebee's Journal*, and the Jacobite *Mist*. He could not succeed in keeping Jacobitism entirely out of the last-named print; but he succeeded in keeping his secret from Mist himself, and in escaping the clutches of the law while Mist fell into them.

Discovery of six letters.

1718.

Defoe's reconciliation with the Government.

Success of the experiment.

This new position of our author's, in which he was "posted among Papists, Jacobites and enraged High Tories" and made to "bow in the House of Rimmon," proved so successful to all parties that he was continued in it by Sunderland when he came into office; and he probably held it till 1726.[2] His entry on it however, was in a very real sense a withdrawal from the world of active political interests, not because his taste for it or his ability to figure conspicuously in it had passed away, but because a period of security and steady progress set in with the accession of the House of Hanover. Never was Defoe's literary activity greater than during the last ten years of his life; but the variety of its character makes it a new, and, for the most part, non-political phase of his energy.

Subsidence of political excitement.

[1] See the letters in Lee's Life of Defoe, Introd., pp. 9—18.

[2] Lee's Defoe i., p. 258.

Defoe's fiction.

It was the period in which his ever memorable novels were written. It is not within the scope of this essay to give more than a passing glance to these; they belong so entirely to the purely literary domain. Of that domain they are among the greatest ornaments; and without an acquaintance with them a satisfactory estimate of Defoe as an artist would be impossible. It may be questioned, however, whether they throw any clear light on his character as a man. It would take us far beyond our limits even to enter on the question how far for example the beauty and simplicity of *Robinson Crusoe*, or the awful impressiveness of the *Journal of the Plague* have their origin in any deep moral qualities, or are the effect of merely intellectual gifts; power of self-identification with imagined characters and situations; immense power of realization, and immense power of expression. A novelist in our time, with Defoe's interest in and knowledge of social and political matters would probably make fiction the vehicle of his social and political ideas; but it was not so with Defoe. Whether they were written for fame or money or only for pleasure, his novels stand apart from his other work, bound to it only by the tie of a matchless style,—a style which is indeed the man's very self.

1728.

To this period belongs also the *Plan of the English Commerce*,[1] in which Defoe showed his understanding of the conditions of commercial life in general, and also as a chief foundation of the special greatness of England.[2]

His economic services.

It was the crown of a distinguished service to the economics of the time, in which he brought to bear a vast amount of far-seeing shrewdness and robust common sense. We have seen what he did towards this end by his advice to William III., and by his *Essay on Projects*. In 1704 in the tract called *Giving Alms no Charity* he had argued against the artificial setting up of industries in particular places for the sake of employing the poor, instead of allowing labour to go where it could be most remuneratively rewarded. On this matter he had very strong and definite convictions indeed. The would-be philanthropists of the day wished to have local manufactories, *e.g.*, of worsted, established in indigent districts. Defoe had too comprehensive a grasp

1704.

[1] The book includes a scheme for colonization of, and commerce with, the African Continent which now-a-days reads like a prophecy.—*Vide* Part III.

[2] He had a high idea of the intrinsic dignity of industrial and commercial life. "A true-bred merchant," he wrote once, "is a universal scholar . . . he understands languages without books, geography without maps; his journals and trading-voyages delineate the world; his foreign exchanges . . . speak all tongues; he sits in his counting-house and converses with all nations, and keeps up the most exquisite and extensive part of human society in a universal correspondence."—*Review*, iii., p. 6.

of the conditions of human prosperity to be influenced by this reasoning. With merciless logic he pointed out that such local endowments of industry would alter its whereabouts, but could not possibly add to its amount. "Suppose," he said, "a workhouse for employment of poor children sets them to spinning of worsted.—For every skein of worsted these poor children spin, there must be a skein the less spun by some poor family or person that spun it before."[1] The indispensable condition of successful trade was freedom of circulation; the economic health of a district consisted not in its being self-sufficing, but in its dependence on distant labour. "'Tis hard to calculate what a blow it would be to trade in general should every county but manufacture the several sorts of goods they use. . . . . What strange work must it . . . make when every town shall have a manufacture, and every parish be a warehouse! Trade will be burthened with corporations which are generally equally destructive as monopolies."[2] By all means let manufactories be set up, provided the manufacture is new to England and interferes with none already in existence.[3] But the true evil, he held, was not scarcity of work, nor excess of numbers, but relaxed moral fibre in the workmen; and the remedy must be a moral, rather than a legislative, one. "If such Acts of Parliament may be made as may effectually cure this sloth and luxury of our poor, that shall make drunkards take care of wife and children, spendthrifts lay up for a wet day . . . they will soon find work enough and there will soon be less poverty among us."[4] If space permitted, we might show how in his *Review* and in many of his writings besides, Defoe proved himself the greatest exponent of that Mercantile System which we have gradually abandoned, but which no one in his day found wanting.

[1] *Giving Alms no Charity.* [2] *Ib.*
[3] *Review* ii., p. 34. Defoe suggested "sail-cloth and other things."
[4] *Giving Alms no Charity.*

THE END. 1726—1731.

ONE wishes that such a career as Defoe's, a career so astonishing, so strenuous, so influential, and yet so disturbed now and again by suspicion, could have closed in dignity and peace. There was a time when it seemed likely to do so. As a regular paid agent of the Whig government from 1715 onwards, and as a multifarious journalist and popular novelist, Defoe had two sources of income which must have put him beyond the reach of pecuniary embarrassment. From 1709 he had lived at Stoke Newington; and by the year 1724 he had built there a comfortable and complete mansion. We have a glimpse of his domestic life in that year which we would fain take away as our final impression. Henry Baker, the naturalist, was at that time courting Sophia, the youngest of "his three lovely daughters . . . admired for their beauty, their education, and their prudent conduct;" and he has told of the newly-built handsome house, of "Mr. Defoe's very genteel way of living," of the tea-table at which the three lovely daughters were to be met, and of the veteran himself, turned sixty and the victim of maladies of old age, yet clear in mind, and dividing his time between literary work and the cultivation of his garden. What causes brought up thick clouds to darken the evening of his life it is very difficult to ascertain. The infamous Mist was his enemy; he had probably attempted to assassinate Defoe in 1724; in 1728 he fled to France; and it is quite likely that he avenged himself by making the worst of Defoe's connexion with his journal, and possibly by raking up old debts against him. However this may have been, the last scene of Defoe's life is one of mystery and gloom.

Defoe at Stoke Newington.

Henry Baker.

Gloom and mystery of closing years.

He had given up writing for *Applebee's Journal* in 1726; and two years later we find him complaing that the journals will not publish his contributions free of expense. It is, presumably, to this reverse of fortune that we owe the works which appeared in the last years of his life—works marvellous in their variety and fulness, and doubly marvellous in a man nearing seventy. It was during these years that Defoe published *A System of Magic*, *A Universal History of Apparitions*, *A New Family Instructor*, *A Political History of the Devil*, and

Defoe gives up writing for *Applebee*.

Last literary undertakings.

much besides. Along with Baker he started a journal called the *Universal Spectator*, of which the first number appeared in 1728. He was in the midst of a book to be called *The Complete English Gentleman*, a treatise on education, when suddenly, in September, 1729, he left his home and disappeared. For nearly a year we have no hint as to his doings or whereabouts. In August, 1730, he wrote a painful letter to his son-in-law which does not make matters much clearer. Baker had been in communication with him, and Defoe thanks him for a letter which had been "a cordial" to "a mind sinking under the weight of affliction too heavy for my strength, and looking on myself as abandoned of every comfort, every Friend, every Relation." He professes that he would fain see his son-in-law and daughter if he could do so "with safety," and without giving Sophia "the grief of seeing her father *in tenebris*, and under the load of insupportable sorrows."

Disappears mysteriously.

Letter to Henry Baker.

"I am sorry," the letter proceeds, "I must open my griefs so far as to tell her, it is not the blow I received from a wicked, perjured and contemptible enemy that has broken in upon my spirit, which, as she well knows, has carried me on through greater diasters than these. But it has been the injustice, unkindness, and I must say inhuman dealing of my own son which has both ruined my Family, and, in a word, has broken my heart. . . . I depended upon him, I trusted him, I gave up my two dear unprovided children into his hands; but he has no compassion, but suffers them and their poor dying mother to beg their bread at his door, and to crave, as if it were an alms, what he is bound under hand and seal besides the most sacred promises to supply them with. . . . It adds to my grief that it is so difficult to me to see you. I am at a distance from London, in Kent; nor have I a lodging in London. . . . At present I am weak, having had some fits of a fever. . . . I have not seen son or daughter, wife or child many weeks, and know not which way to see them. They dare not come by water, and by land there is no coach, and I know not what to do." He adds solemn and pathetic words which we may surely believe sincere. "I would say (I hope) with Comfort, that 'tis yet well. I am so near my Journey's end, and am hastening to the place where the weary are at rest, and where the wicked cease to trouble; be it that the passage is rough and the day stormy, by what way soever He please to bring me to the end of it, I desire to finish life with this temper of soul in all cases: *Te Deum Laudamus*."[1]

It seems necessary to quote somewhat largely the *ipsissima verba* of this letter, because there is no evidence to supplement

[1] Lee's Defoe i., pp. 457—459.

it. What was "the blow from a wicked, perjured and contemptible enemy" which only Defoe's unconquerable spirit enabled him to survive? Was it some machination of Mist's, or were the creditors again on the track? Or was the old man the victim of illusions bred of sickness (in the letter he speaks of being threatened with fever), which persuaded him that he must be a fugitive? With the testimony at present before us we cannot answer these questions. The letter is certainly exaggerated in expression; but there must have been good reason for Defoe's absenting himself from London for more than a year and concealing his destination. We can but regret that on one so old so much suffering was laid, however it may have been caused; and that he did not (to use his own expression) *make the Port of Heaven without a storm.*

No satisfactory explanation.

The end was now at hand. Wherever the stricken man was (the letter is dated from "About two miles from Greenwich, Kent") he seems to have clung with pathetic tenacity to the work in which he had lived. A tract called *An Effectual Scheme for the Preventing of Street Robberies*, bearing unmistakeable traces of his authorship, and written with much force, was recently discovered. It was published in 1731, and probably written during the last exile. Between August, 1730, and April, 1731, he must have returned to London, though not, it would seem, to his home at Stoke Newington. In the evening of the 28th of April, 1731, he died "of a lethargy" in Ropemakers' Alley, Moorfields; and was buried in the cemetery now known as Bunhill Fields.

Death.

Defoe had reached the allotted span of human life; and yet so great and versatile had been his energy up to the last that it is difficult for us to think of his work as ended or his life as rounded off in completeness. A man who at fifty-eight could write *Robinson Crusoe*, with its morning-light of freshness and purity, might, we are tempted to think, have renewed his youth again and again, and accompanied with his vivid intelligence and ready sympathy phase after phase of his country's history. Yet, in a very real sense, his work had been finished many years before his death. We have regarded him throughout from the historian's point of view, in which both his personal character and his work in fiction appear as of secondary interest. Therefore it may be allowed us to look on the last ten or twelve years of his life, which were the period of his glory as a novelist as well as of the greatest strain on his moral reputation, as an appendix to the tale. He had lived in and expounded and illustrated the life of his nation in its great transition from despotism to legality; he had seen government by party born, and pass through its turbulent youth into self-respect

Defoe's claims on historical interest.

Summary of his work.

and strength. He had stood by when the flood-gates of free discussion were opened, and by his own brilliant example had shown that it was possible to combine the fullest debate and the frankest appeal to reason with the most unswerving loyalty and untainted patriotism. He had fought strenuously for the Balance of Power in Europe, and the establishment of Protestantism on the English throne; and he had won. He had been an apostle of toleration, not in the pulpit or the study, but in the councils of statesmen and the rough world of angry controversy. He had understood and followed into all their consequences the principles of expanding English commerce, and given a living impulse to countless forms of national enterprise. He understood the labour problem of his time better than any other man. Above all he had helped in the realization of his most cherished economical and political ideas in the Union of England and Scotland. With the setting in of the long Whig *régime* and the comparatively long peace under the House of Hanover, a new order of things began, and a time of tranquillity and fruition, in which Defoe's historical importance falls into the background, and we lose the statesman in the novelist and the miscellaneous writer.

His literary interest.

Yet it is impossible to be indifferent either to the moral or the literary aspect of so remarkable a man. There has been a disposition to ignore or undervalue Defoe as a writer—except as the author of *Robinson Crusoe*—which it is hard either to understand or defend. For the extraordinary merit of *Robinson Crusoe*, the copiousness yet restraint of the diction, the clearness, the sweetness, the loving sympathy displayed by the style, is to be found in everything Defoe published. We need say nothing of the life-like realism which has been the subject of so much remark. Perhaps we best express by the word *sympathy* the quality which gives Defoe his literary distinction. If it is the highest of gifts to be objective and to merge oneself in the creation of one's art, the merit of Defoe is high indeed. We cannot explain the living reality of *Crusoe* by any theory of its being autobiographical. It would be truer to say that Defoe was *Crusoe*, than that *Crusoe* was Defoe. As he wrote, he was not at Stoke Newington but on the island; he was behind his hero, he *was* his hero, just as he was in the plague-stricken streets of London, by sheer power of sympathy. And as it was with the situations of fiction, so was it with the matters of real life on which he wrote. There are very few of Defoe's pamphlets and articles which are not interesting even now, because the author is thoroughly *en rapport* with his subject, because he lives in it for the time being and makes its reasonableness speak for itself. With this power of self-effacing sympathy there goes

a gift of purity which is remarkable when we consider what the standard of the time was in this respect. There is much in Defoe's fiction which offends the refinement of our manners; but there is hardly a trace of the love of uncleanness for its own sake which we find in Defoe's great contemporary Swift, and in the founders of the school of English fiction in George II's reign. There is none of Swift's mighty wit and scathing satire; and it is seldom, if ever, that the cheerful daylight of Defoe's human sympathy kindles into the sunshine of humour. The absence of sparkle will probably always prevent the rest of Defoe's novels from sharing the popularity of *Crusoe*, which makes its way through the simple heart of childhood. Still, it would be hard to deny him the title of a great tale-teller, even if, as such, he stands somewhat apart. And harder still would it be to cavil at his pre-eminence as the true inaugurator of journalism, by virtue of the wide range of his interests, his foresight, his patient attention to detail, and his faultless common sense.

Our moral criticism of Defoe, even when it has to condemn aberrations from the path of perfect rectitude and a too ready subservience to those with gifts to bestow, cannot ignore the constancy of his patriotism; nor will it dare to judge him out of relation to the standard of his time and to the thorny temptations which beset public life in all times. The mere recital of Defoe's undeniable services to his day and generation is in itself a monument to virtue; and there is, even now, an obscurity hanging over his private life which may dispose us to charity. He was one of the heroes of a new time—a time which has been pronounced unheroic, and which certainly offered no very sublime heights for the attainment of its sons. Of that time, such as it was, Defoe is the oracle; and if we would hear its voice, whether for encouragement or warning, it is to him that we must go.